

# **TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA: CHALLENGES FACED BY ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

by

**Sandra Jacki Jackson**



**Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Social Work in the  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University  
of Stellenbosch**

Study Leader: Dr M Strydom

December 2018

## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work and that I am the sole author thereof (unless otherwise stated). Furthermore, I declare that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2018

## **DEDICATION**

**To all birth parents, adoptees and adoptive parents.**

“A child born to another woman calls me Mommy. The magnitude of that tragedy and the depth of that privilege is not lost on me.”

Jody Landers

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This body of work owes its completion to the invaluable contributions of many people:

- Most importantly, to the twenty participants who willingly gave their time and shared their very personal experiences with me. Your narratives will stay with me.
- To everyone at the **Department of Social Work** (University of Stellenbosch) for their support. I would particularly like to thank **Dr Strydom** for her inspiration, guidance and empathy when life threw the odd curve ball at me. Also, to **Rochelle Williams** for always being so willing to help and adding a smile to my face with her special brand of humour!
- To **Eppie McFarlane** for editing this thesis at very short notice.
- To my **family**, especially **Dad, Trudie, Carol, Michiel** and **Mom** for your ceaseless encouragement, always being there for me, and having my back no matter what.
- To my **friends** for always being genuinely interested (I think) in the progress I was making. I look forward to spending more time with you now that this is complete! A special thank you to **Maddi** for her compassion when life didn't go according to plan, acting as friend, therapist and supporter.
- To **Craig, Tassin and James** for giving me the opportunity to make this vision become a reality. Thank you for being understanding of my absence, picking up the slack and believing in me.
- To **Arise Cape Town**, especially **Sonia Hinder**, for their kindness in assisting me with finding research participants. Also to **Danielle Meintjies** for agreeing to be "on call" if needed.
- Lastly, to my son **James** whose earliest memories of Mommy, are of her sitting at a computer, working. Thank you for being so patient. You coming into our lives is what inspired me to begin my academic journey. Without you I would never have experienced the privilege of being a student of the wonder of being a mother.

## SUMMARY

In South Africa there is an abundance of abandoned babies as well as children orphaned as a result of HIV and other causes. Traditionally, in African cultures, extended family care for orphans. However, due to the increasing number of HIV orphans in both rural and urban communities, these systems are no longer able to cope. This has contributed to increased numbers of children in need of adoption. In addition, transracial adoption has been fuelled by a disproportionate and racially skewed ratio of adoptive parents and babies available for adoption in South Africa. There are not as many white children in need of adoption as there are black children available for adoption, which subsequently leads to transracial adoption.

Due to the fact that in South Africa, transracial adoption has been on the rise since its legalisation in 1991, this study aimed to gain an understanding of the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents.

A qualitative approach was used in this study. A combination of exploratory and descriptive research designs was utilized as a framework for the research approach. Data was gathered by a means of semi-structured interview schedule, which was conducted during personal interviews with the transracial adoptive parents.

The findings of the empirical study revealed that according to the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents, it was the view of participants that education of society, especially the older generation and the black population, is essential.

Findings further indicated that there is a dire need for adoption organisations to ensure that transracial adoptive parents are supported prior to adoption, throughout the adoption process and post adoption. Service was found to be inconsistent depending on which adoption organisations are utilized. A recommendation of the study was to offer a uniform training programme for all adoption social workers, to ensure that service offered by both government and private adoption organisations is standard and the same service is offered, regardless of the adoptive parent's financial status.

Challenges such as whether transracial adoptive parents would be willing to expose their adopted children to their birth culture; deciding whether to encourage children to learn their birth language; how to manage their fear for their adopted child's future and how to provide

them with the tools to manage racism should their children be confronted with it, were topics that participants experienced as challenging.

Additionally, it was found that where the overall experience of adoption was positive, interaction with the Department of Home Affairs was found to be a negative experience. Service was described as inefficient and being at Home Affairs' mercy while waiting for the crucial paperwork which would confirm that their adopted child was finally theirs in name, was frustrating and extremely emotional for transracial adoptive parents.

The recommendations regarding the challenges faced with Home Affairs, emphasised that the Department should consider training dedicated staff in the field of adoption administration, to streamline the process and alleviate challenges faced by adoptive parents.

The recommendation regarding education of society included educating children about adoption in schools. Ensuring that the future generation is educated regarding transracial adoption could pave the way for future generations to have a better understanding of transracial adoption, as well as being more accepting thereof. Learners could impart their knowledge to others, ultimately educating friends, family, community and society.

## OPSOMMING

In Suid-Afrika is daar 'n oorvloed verlate babas asook kinders wat wees gelaat is as gevolg van MIV en ander oorsake. In tradisionele Afrika-kulture, sorg die uitgebreide familiegroep gewoonlik vir weeskinders. As gevolg van die toenemende aantal MIV-weeskinders in beide landelike en stedelike gemeenskappe, kan tradisionele stelsels nie meer byhou nie. As gevolg daarvan is daar 'n toenemende aantal kinders wat 'n behoefte het aan aanneming. Daarbenewens is “transracial” aanneming aangevuur deur 'n oneweredige en rassistiese wanverhouding tussen aanneemouers en babas wat beskikbaar is vir aanneming in Suid-Afrika. Daar is minder wit kinders in die behoefte van aanvaarding terwyl daar volop swart kinders beskikbaar is. Die feit lei tot “transracial” aanneming.

“Transracial” aanneming is sedert sy wettiging in 1991 besig om toe te neem, dus het hierdie studie ten doel gestel om 'n beter begrip van die uitdagings wat “transracial” aannemende ouers beleef.

'n Kwalitatiewe benadering is toegepas vir hierdie studie. 'n Ondersoekende asook beskrywende navorsingsontwerpe is gebruik as die raamwerk vir die navordingsbenadering. Data is versamel deur middel van 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoudskedule wat uitgevoer is tydens persoonlike onderhoude met die “transracial” aanneemouers.

Die bevindinge van die empiriese studie het gewys dat volgens die uitdagings gekonfronteer deur “transracial” aanneemouers, is dit die mening van die deelnemers dat opleiding van die gemeenskap, veral die ouer geslag en die swart bevolking, noodsaaklik is.

Bevindinge het verder aangedui dat daar 'n ernstige behoefte is vir aanneming organisasies om te verseker dat “transracial” aanneemouers voor aanneming, regdeur die aanneming proses en na aanneming ondersteun is. Diensoorsiening was ongelyk bevind afhangende van watter aanneming organisasie gebruik is.

'n Aanbeveling van die studie was om 'n eenvormige opleidingsprogram vir alle aanneming maatskaplike werkers aan te bied, om te verseker dat eenvormige dienste aangebied word deur beide die regerings en privaat aanneming organisasies, en dat dieselfde dienste afgelewer is, ongeag die aanneemouers se finansiële status.

Verskeie uitdagings, byvoorbeeld of ouers bereid is om hul aangenome kinders bloot te stel aan hul geboorte kultuur; besluit of kinders aan te moedig om hul geboortetaal te leer; hoe om te hul vrees vir hul aangenome kind se toekoms te hanteer, en om hulle te voorsien met die emosionele gereedskap om die bestuur van rassisme as hul kinders daarmee gekonfronteer is, was deur deelnemers ervaar.

'n Verdere bevinding is dat waar die algehele ervaring van aanneming positief was, was interaksie met die Departement van Binnelandse Sake 'n negatiewe ervaring gewees. Diens is beskryf as ondoeltreffend. Om aanneemouers vir die belangrike papierwerk wat sou bevestig dat hul aangenome kind uiteinelik hulle s'n in naam is, te laat wag, was frustrerend en emosioneel vir die “transracial” aanneemouers gewees.

Die aanbevelinge rakende die uitdagings gekonfronteer met Binnelandse Sake, het gewys dat die Departement opleiding met toegewyde personeel in die veld van aanneming administrasie in ag moet neem, om die proses meer vaartbelyn te maak en om die uitdagings van “transracial” aanneemowers te verlig.

Die aanbeveling met betrekking tot die onderwys van samelewing, is dat onderwys oor aanneming in skole 'n oplossing vir hierdie probleem kan wees. Om te verseker dat die toekomstige geslagte opgevoed word met betrekking tot “transracial” aanneming, kan dit die weg baan vir toekomstige geslagte om 'n beter begrip en aanvaarding van “transracial” aanneming te hê. Leerders kan hul kennis oordra, wat sal bydra tot opvoeding van vriende, familie, gemeenskap en samelewing.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

1.1	PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE.....	1
1.2	PROBLEM STATEMENT AND FOCUS.....	4
1.3	RESEARCH QUESTION.....	7
1.4	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	7
1.5	THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE.....	7
1.6	KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS.....	8
1.6.1	Adoption.....	8
1.6.2	Adoptive Parents.....	9
1.6.3	Adoptable Child.....	9
1.6.4	Transracial Adoption.....	9
1.7	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	9
1.7.1	Literature Review.....	9
1.7.2	Research Approach.....	10
1.7.3	Research Design.....	11
1.7.4	Population, Sampling and Sampling Techniques.....	12
1.7.5	Instrument for Data Collection.....	13
1.7.6	Data Analysis.....	15
1.7.7	Methods of Data Verification.....	15
1.7.7.1	Validity and Reliability.....	15
1.7.7.2	Trustworthiness.....	16
1.7.7.2.1	Credibility.....	16
1.7.7.2.2	Transferability.....	16
1.7.7.2.3	Dependability.....	16
1.7.7.2.4	Conformability.....	16

1.7.8	Pilot Study.....	17
1.8	ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	17
1.8.1	Ethical Clearance.....	17
1.8.2	Ethical Issues.....	17
1.8.2.1	Avoidance of Harm.....	17
1.8.2.2	Voluntary Participation.....	18
1.8.2.3	Informed Consent.....	18
1.8.2.4	Compensation.....	19
1.8.2.5	Confidentiality.....	19
1.9	LIMITATIONS.....	19
1.10	PRESENTATION.....	20

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ADOPTION: LEGISLATION AND POLICY WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	21
2.2	POLICY GOVERNING ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	23
2.2.1	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child.....	23
2.2.2	The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Children.....	24
2.2.3	The White Paper for Social Welfare.....	24
2.2.3.1	Adoption as an option for abandoned children.....	25
2.2.3.2	Adoption as a means of protection and prevention of harm to children.....	25
2.2.3.3	Adoption as a means of permanency planning for children.....	25
2.3	HISTORY OF ADOPTION LEGISLATION IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	27
2.3.1	Dutch Law.....	27
2.3.2	Adoption of Children Act 25 of 1923.....	27
2.3.3	The Development of Adoption in Customary Law.....	28
2.3.4	Children's Act 31 of 1937.....	30
2.3.5	Children's Act 33 of 1960.....	30
2.3.6	Child Care Act 74 of 1983.....	31
2.4	CURRENT LEGISLATION GOVERNING ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA .....	31
2.4.1	The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.....	32
2.4.2	The Children's Act 3 of 2005.....	33
2.5	A CHILD IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION.....	34
2.5.1	The right to be cared for.....	34
2.5.2	An adoptable child.....	35
2.6	THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD.....	36
2.7	TYPES OF ADOPTION .....	36
2.8	FORMS OF ADOPTION.....	37

2.8.1	Open adoption.....	38
2.8.2	Closed adoption.....	38
2.9	THE ADOPTION PROCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	39
2.9.1	Reasons for wanting to adopt.....	40
2.9.2	Persons who may adopt a child.....	41
2.9.3	The screening and placement process.....	42
2.9.4	The Adoption Triad.....	43
2.9.4.1	The biological parents.....	44
2.9.4.2	The adoptive parents.....	45
2.9.4.3	The child.....	46
2.9.5	Experiences of adoptive parents.....	46
2.10	THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER.....	48
2.10.1	Persons allowed to provide adoption services.....	48
2.10.2	The role of the social worker in counselling the adoption triad.....	49
2.10.2.1	Counselling the biological parents.....	49
2.10.2.2	Counselling the prospective parents.....	50
2.10.2.3	Counselling the adopted child.....	50
2.10.3	Role of broker in legal proceedings.....	51
2.10.4	Role of Administrator – Register for Adoptable Children and Prospective Adoptive Parents.....	51
2.11	CONCLUSION.....	51

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	52
3.2	BRONFENBRENNER’S ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION.....	53
3.2.1	Microsystem.....	56
3.2.1.1	Attachment.....	57
3.2.1.2	Sibling Relationships.....	60
3.2.1.3	Marital Relationship.....	60
3.2.2	The Mesosystem.....	61
3.2.2.1	Biological family context.....	62
3.2.2.2	Peer relationships.....	63
3.2.3	The Exosystem.....	64
3.2.3.1	Availability of support services.....	64
3.2.4	The Macrosystem .....	66
3.2.5	The Chronosystem .....	67
3.3	CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS .....	67
3.3.1	Absence of racial resemblance.....	69
3.3.2	Racial awareness of adoptive parents.....	71
3.3.3	Protection of child’s heritage.....	73
3.3.4	Managing societal perceptions of transracial adoption.....	76
3.4	THE ROLE OF THE ORGANISATION AND ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKERS.....	78
3.5	CONCLUSION.....	79

# CHAPTER 4

## EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS

4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	80
4.2	RESEARCH METHOD.....	81
4.2.1	Preparation for Investigation.....	81
4.2.2	Research Sample.....	81
4.2.3	Research approach, design and instrument.....	81
4.2.4	Data gathering and analysis.....	82
4.3	RESULTS OF THE STUDY.....	82
4.3.1	Profile of the Participants.....	83
4.3.1	Gender of Participants.....	83
4.3.1.2	Age of the Participants.....	84
4.3.1.3	Marital Status of the Participants.....	85
4.3.1.4	Education/Training of Participants.....	86
4.3.1.5	Population Group of Participants.....	87
4.3.1.6	Employment of Participants.....	88
4.3.2	Biological and Adopted Children.....	89
4.3.2.1	Number of Biological and Adopted Children.....	89
4.3.2.2	Number of Children Adopted by each Participant.....	91
4.3.2.3	Race of Adopted Children.....	92
4.3.2.4	Age of Child/Children When Adopted.....	93
4.3.2.5	Current Age of Adopted Children.....	94
4.3.3	The Adoption Process.....	95
4.3.3.1	Marital Status at Time of Adoption.....	95
4.3.3.2	Type of Adoption Agency Used.....	96
4.3.3.3	Length of Time Adoption Took.....	97
4.3.3.4	Form of Adoption.....	98
4.3.3.5	Experiences of Adoption Process.....	99

(a)	Sub-theme: Positive Experience .....	100
(i)	Category: Adoption process was uncomplicated.....	100
(b)	Sub-theme: Negative Experience.....	100
(i)	Category: Incompetence of service providers.....	101
4.3.4	Challenges Experienced Regarding Transracial Adoption.....	102
4.3.4.1	Experiences of challenges faced with immediate relationships.....	102
(a)	Sub-theme: Spousal relationships were not affected.....	103
(i)	Category: Consensus needed between partners prior to adoption.....	103
(ii)	Category: Post adoption spousal challenges related to becoming first time parents .....	104
(b)	Sub-theme: Responses of family varied.....	105
(i)	Category: Family members took time to adjust to adoption.....	105
(ii)	Category: Family members were supportive, accepting and positive...	106
(c)	Sub-theme: Attachment to adopted child was easy.....	107
(i)	Category: Parents bonded without delay.....	107
(ii)	Category: Anxious about bonding.....	107
(iii)	Category: Mindful about attachment.....	108
(d)	Sub-theme: Immediate acceptance of adopted child by siblings.....	109
(i)	Category: Early bonding.....	109
4.3.4.2	Challenges experienced with systems outside of the family.....	109
(a)	Sub-theme: Workplace: Colleagues and Associates were supportive.....	111
(i)	Category: Work colleagues and associates expressed support, acceptance and positivity.....	111
(ii)	Category: Colleagues and associates in the work place were interested and questioning.....	111
(iii)	Category: Employers were accommodating.....	112
(b)	Sub-theme: Schools: Aware of racial diversity as a challenge.....	113
(i)	Category: Racial diversity in schools satisfactory.....	113
(ii)	Category: Lack of racial diversity in schools.....	114
(c)	Sub-theme: Biological family: Lack of contact.....	115
(i)	Category: Adoptive parents yearned for contact with their child's biological family.....	115

	(ii) Category: No contact with biological family.....	116
	(d) Sub-theme: Friends: Absence of Racial Prejudice.....	117
	(i) Category: Friends were racially diverse.....	117
	(e) Sub-theme: Church: Varying reaction.....	118
	(i) Category: Degree of acceptance varied.....	118
4.3.4.3	Experiences of challenges with support systems.....	119
	(a) Sub-theme: Satisfied with pre-adoption services .....	121
	(i) Category: Preparation was good.....	121
	(b) Sub-theme: Pre-adoption services not offered .....	121
	(i) Category: Lack of pre-adoption services.....	121
	(c) Sub-theme: Satisfied with post-adoption services.....	122
	(i) Category: Post adoption support was offered.....	122
	(d) Sub-theme: Post adoption services not offered.....	123
	(i) Category: Lack of post adoption services.....	123
	(e) Sub-theme: Need for specific service.....	124
	(i) Category: Need to connect with other adoptive parents.....	124
4.3.4.3	Experiences of challenges with society as a system.....	125
	(a) Sub-theme: Absence of resemblance between parents and child.....	126
	(i) Category: Longed to be inconspicuous as a family.....	126
	(ii) Category: Black people made comments and asked imposing questions.....	127
	(b) Sub-theme: Protection of child's heritage.....	127
	(i) Category: Efforts are made to expose children to their culture.....	127
	(ii) Category: Children are exposed to African birth language.....	128
	(c) Sub-theme: Lack of knowledge about adoption.....	129
	(i) Category: Society is ignorant about adoption.....	129
	(ii) Category: Strangers commented on how fortunate the adopted child was.....	130
	(d) Sub-theme: Inappropriate questions in/from public.....	130
	(i) Category: Unprepared to answer adoption related questions from strangers.....	131
4.3.4.4	Three main challenges experienced by participants throughout the	



adoption process.....	132
(a) Sub-theme: Fear for the future of the child.....	133
(i) Category: Child would struggle with identity.....	134
(ii) Category: Child would be exposed to racism.....	134
(b) Sub-theme: Feeling judged by society.....	135
(i) Category: Difficult to blend into society.....	135
(ii) Category: Lack of education about adoption in society.....	136
(c) Sub-theme: Inadequately prepared for transracial adoption.....	137
(i) Category: Lack of preparation for adoption.....	137
(ii) Category: Lack of post adoption support.....	138
4.4 CONCLUSION.....	138

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	140
5.2	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	140
5.2.1	Profile of the Participants.....	140
5.2.2	Biological and Adopted Children.....	141
5.2.3	The Adoption Process.....	142
5.2.4	Challenges Experienced Regarding Transracial Adoption.....	142
5.2.4.1	Challenges Experienced with Immediate Relationships.....	143
5.2.4.2	Challenges Experienced Faced with Systems Outside the Family.....	144
5.2.4.3	Challenges Experienced with Support Systems.....	145
5.2.4.4	Challenges Experienced with Society as a System.....	146
5.2.4.5	Three Main Challenges Experienced Throughout the Adoption Process.....	147
5.2.5	Key Findings and Conclusions.....	148
5.2.6	Further research.....	149
	 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 151
	 APPENDIX A: Semi-structured interview schedule.....	 171
	APPENDIX B: Informed Consent.....	176

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	Experiences of Adoption Process.....	99
Table 4.2	Challenges experienced with immediate relationships.....	103
Table 4.3	Experiences of interaction with systems outside of the family.....	110
Table 4.4	Experiences of participants regarding challenges with support services.....	120
Table 4.5	Challenges faced by participants regarding societal perceptions towards transracial adoption.....	125
Table 4.6	Views of participants regarding the three main challenges experienced throughout the adoption process.....	133

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1	Gender of Participants.....	83
Figure 4.2	Age of Participants.....	84
Figure 4.3	Marital Status of Participants.....	85
Figure 4.4	Education/Training of Participants.....	86
Figure 4.5	Population of Participants.....	87
Figure 4.6	Employment of Participants.....	88
Figure 4.7	Biological and Adopted Children.....	90
Figure 4.8	Number of Children Adopted by Each Participant.....	91
Figure 4.9	Race of Adopted Children.....	92
Figure 4.10	Age of Child/Children When Adopted.....	93
Figure 4.11	Current Age of Child/Children.....	94
Figure 4.12	Marital Status at Time of Adoption.....	95
Figure 4.13	Type of Adoption Agency used.....	96
Figure 4.14	Length of Time Adoption Process Took.....	97
Figure 4.15	Form of Adoption.....	98

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PRELIMINARY STUDY AND RATIONALE**

Brooks, Simmel, Wind and Barth (2005) state that the nature of adoption has changed dramatically in the past three decades. A more complex and diverse form of family life has replaced the stereotype of an infertile couple adopting a same-race new-born baby and having limited or no information about, or contact with, the child's birth family. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as the availability of adoptable babies declined, prospective adoptive parents began seeking to adopt older children living in foster care, as well as children born in foreign countries. In many of these cases, the children were of a different race or ethnic group than that of the adoptive parents. According to Javier, Baden, Biafora, & Camacho-Gingerich (2007:xiv), many of these children had special medical, psychological or educational needs and the field of adoption moved towards increased openness, with more information regarding the child's history, being offered to the adoptive parents.

Information discussed on international adoption is predominantly based on one source. Although the said literature dates back to 2005, it is, nevertheless, currently relevant. In 1993, 55 countries, including most of the sending and receiving countries in the international adoption world, approved a multilateral treaty called The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. This constitutes the most significant legitimization of international adoption to date. Although in-country adoption should be preferred over international adoption, international adoption is still a preferred option for children over institutional care in their home countries (Askeland, 2005). Aronson (cited by Askeland, 2005) states that large numbers of children in poor countries in the world live in distressing circumstances. Many spend their lives in orphanages, largely deprived of the human touch apart from being fed by caregivers. These children are unlikely to develop emotionally and mentally in a manner which will enable them to relate to other human beings in a meaningful way. The more time spent in orphanages, the less chance they have of normal development. (Aronson, Hoksbergen, Talbot, Judge & Bartholet, cited by Askeland, 2005). Bartholet (cited by Askeland, 2005) is of the opinion that children placed in international adoption flourish. She states that deficits caused by early deprivation can be overcome by international adoption, although the age of placement plays a significant role in predicting the chance of a "normal life".

International law has moved in the direction of increased recognition of children's rights and interests, as has the domestic law of many countries. (Bartholet, cited by Askeland, 2005). According to Ruppel (1991) in 1978 a proposal for a new convention on children's rights was made by Poland. The proposal raised issues with regard to children's rights being binding. Although minor amendments were made, Poland's draft served as the basis for the 1989 Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC).

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a powerful new international recognition of the importance of children's rights generally (Askeland, 2005). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child should be raised by his/her family or extended family whenever possible. If this is not deemed possible, other forms of permanent care in the country of origin should be considered. Only after due consideration has been given to national prospective adoptive parents and it is proven that the child cannot be cared for in his/her country of origin, will international adoption be considered.

In South Africa, the Department of Social Development, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, developed chapter 16 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, to give effect to this convention. The role of accredited child protection organisations as key role players in facilitating placement of children and the mandate of the Department of Justice and Correctional Development, which conducts children's court enquiries and approves all applications in respect of intercountry adoptions, is outlined in this document. Specific provisions when working with a child, natural parents, prospective adoptive parents as well as procedures to be followed when collaborating with The Hague and non-Hague Convention countries, are defined (Skweyiya, n.d.).

Adoption in South Africa was legally recognised in 1923 as part of the Adoption of Children Act 25 of 1923 (Ferreira, 2009:14,19). Although the Act did not explicitly prohibit transracial adoption, this was unlikely to have occurred, due to strong racial attitudes and segregation at that time (Ferreira, 2009:24, 26). The enactment of the Children's Act 33 of 1960, stated that children could not be placed with a person who was registered as a different race than that of the child (Gishen, 1996). The Act essentially prohibited transracial adoption. The current Children's Act 38 of 2005, has altered significantly, to facilitate national adoption by, for example, expanding the categories of persons who may adopt a child. In terms of section 231 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (which was fully implemented in April 2010), any person over the age of 18 years may legally adopt a child given their approval as fit to raise a child. Adoption applicants can no longer be disqualified from adopting a child because of their

employment status, marital status, financial status, sexual orientation, and HIV status (Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015). Regardless of this amendment, court ordered adoption figures in South Africa remain low and have shown no sign of increasing in recent years (Mokomane, Rochat & The Directorate, 2011).

Surprisingly, the majority of children being adopted in South Africa are white children being adopted by step-parents. However, the majority of children in the child care and protection system who are eligible for adoption, are black (Louw, 2009). In terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (2006:section 240:219) when considering an application for the adoption of a child, the court must take into account all relevant factors, including the religious and cultural background of the child, the child's parent and the prospective adoptive parent. Priority is therefore given to same race adoption as it resembles a "natural family". Child Welfare South Africa clarifies this statement by asserting that when matching a child with a suitable family, social workers' first choice of adoptive parents would be that of the same race as the child. However, due to the fact that there are currently limited black adoption applicants, black children cannot always be placed with black families. Only if unable to find an adoptive family of the same race and culture for the child, is transracial adoption considered (Ntongana, 2015).

Currently in South Africa, white adoption applicants far exceed black adoption applicants. Mokomane *et al.* (2011) state that black South African citizens believe that the legal adoption process does not fit with their cultural and ancestral belief systems. They view adoption as severing a child's relationship with their clan roots & family of origin, which leads to serious repercussions for the adopted child's ancestry, security and welfare. These views, in addition to a variety of social, economic, political and material circumstances, cause many black citizens to opt for abandonment, in the belief that it will secure a better future for the child. As it is not in the best interest of the child to spend lengthy periods in a youth care centre, black children are placed with white families.

Child abandonment in South Africa has been labelled "South Africa's dirty little secret". With approximately 3500 children being abandoned annually, it has become a considerable challenge facing South Africa (Wolfson Vorster, 2015). The immense challenge facing child welfare in South Africa, is securing permanent care for these orphaned and abandoned children who appear to be "trapped" in the care and protection system. Present policy and legislation recommends adoption as the preferred placement of a child when their family or primary caregiver is considered unsuitable or unable to provide stability in the child's life. Rondell and Murray (1974:5) and Owusu-Bempah (2010:1) state that adoption and fostering are two

foremost methods of alternative child care likely to be used when biological parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children. Adoption offers abandoned children the opportunity to “establish lifetime relationships within a constitutionally entrenched supportive family environment” (Children’s Act 38 of 2005 & Louw, cited by Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015).

The researcher advanced current research by investigating the subjective views of transracial adoptive parents with regards to the challenges they encountered throughout their transracial adoption journey. Motivations that lead parents or individuals to decide to adopt, are often coupled with feelings of loss and/or failure. Feelings of frustration can emerge during the adoption process, where parents are at the mercy of a system which often seems to fail them. Becoming an instant family brings about a new set of challenges. Parents form a new relationship with their child and explore their role as parents to the child. Unique to transracial adoption, are challenges such as adoptive parents feeling responsible for the racial identity development of their child and protecting their child from racism (Child Information Gateway, 2015).

By gathering information on transracial adoptive parent’s challenges, the researcher was of the opinion that this information would assist prospective adoptive parents in gaining valuable knowledge about the adoption process through adoptive parents sharing their experiences. Finally, conducting the research will aid adoption service providers, and especially social workers, in providing an improved service to prospective parents, as well as offering the necessary support for those who have adopted transracially.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND FOCUS**

As has been noted, in South Africa there is an abundance of abandoned babies (Blackie, 2014a; Luhanga, 2008), as well as children orphaned as a result of HIV and other causes (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2012; Schroeder & Nichola, 2006). Traditionally, in African cultures, extended family care for orphans. However, due to the increasing number of HIV orphans in both rural and urban communities, these systems are no longer able to cope. (Freeman & Nkomo, 2006). This has contributed to increased numbers of children in need of adoption. In addition, transracial adoption has been fuelled by a disproportionate and racially skewed ratio of adoptive parents and babies available for adoption in South Africa (Camara, 2014). There are not as many white children in need of adoption as there are black children



available for adoption, which subsequently leads to transracial adoption. (Szabo & Ritchken, 2002).

Lawson (1995) maintains that decisions regarding the placement of a child are made primarily with the child's right to a family, with race being a secondary consideration. Legislation supports the notion that for a child's development, living in a family environment is vital, regardless of whether the child's family is racially different to the child (Lawson, 1995).

Research regarding transracial adoption has to a large extent, focused on the question of whether a "white family in a racist society can provide the environment which will advance the psychological well-being of a black child" (Hollingsworth, Small, Wainwright & Ridley, cited by Doubell: 2014). Although research regarding transracial adoption in South Africa is available, literature is limited. There are few studies which discuss issues around transracial adoption in South Africa, such as those by Atmore and Biersteker (1997), Freeman and Nkomo (2006), Ritchken (2002) and Blackie (2014a). Atmore and Biersteker's (2006) study which took place in the Durban Metropolitan area, found the effects of apartheid difficult to alter. However, they found that children placed in secure transracially adoptive families have the ability to adjust and thrive.

Freeman and Nkomo's (2006) study investigated the effect of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) on the increase of orphans in black, poor communities. Due to the increasing number of black orphans in rural and urban communities with a high AIDS prevalence, these systems are placed under immense strain. Szabo and Ritchken's (2002) study revealed that few white babies become available for adoption by white families, which results in white families transracially adopting the high number of black orphans in need of families. Rochat, Mokamane, Mitchell and The Directorate (2016) found that low adoption rates are influenced by an absence of subsidies, poor access to quality adoptive services and a lack of information about adoption. Doubell (2014) researched the views of social workers on transracial adoption of abandoned children in South Africa and found that negative attitudes of extended family regarding transracial adoption, racism within the larger community and cultural differences, were amongst the most prominent challenges faced by adoptive parents.

Langenhoven's (2017:107) study on adult adoptees' perspectives on adoption, found that all participants viewed transracial adoption as positive, but stated that adoptive parents should educate themselves regarding aspects of their child's growth, including the child's biological heritage.

In a study on parental couple experience of transracial adoption, Romanini (2017:110) found that adoptive parents considered implementing the adopted child's culture and heritage and unpreparedness for reactions of the community to the transracial adoption, amongst challenges they experienced.

Transracial adoption in South Africa has a distinctive feature in that it may be the only country in the world where a racial minority regularly adopt from the racial majority. In this regard, Kahn (2006:xi) states, "While there is a wealth of information written for overseas readers, there is practically nothing available that takes our unique South African context into consideration". Rochat, Mokomane *et al.* (2016) agree with this statement by adding that "little is known about public perceptions, beliefs and experiences that inform decisions to either foster or adopt in South Africa". South Africa has a unique history and a diverse culture. With this in mind, it is imperative that all South Africans, especially professionals in the humanities field, prospective adoptive parents, as well as adoptive parents, understand transracial adoption in the context of South Africa's uniqueness.

In light of the above mentioned research, the problem formulation for this research study is that there is insufficient literature about the challenges experienced by parents who adopt transracially in South Africa. Doubell (2014) maintains that parents who adopt transracially face challenges such as having to consider the environment they will be raising their child in (extended family and wider community) and examining their willingness to expose their adopted child to his or her culture.

Although lack of literature could be due to the fact that this form of adoption has only been legal since 1991, the fact remains that there has been insufficient focus on a topic which is extremely relevant in South Africa. There is a dire need for further research to be carried out in order to explore transracial adoption in a South African context. The researcher was of the opinion that conducting a study focusing on the challenges of transracial adoptive parents in the Western Cape could address the gaps in existing research and ultimately identify the possible support needed by transracial adoptive parents. This was achieved, and a clearer understanding of the needs of transracial adoptive parents' needs regarding support, was gained.

The focus of the study was to explore and describe the challenges experienced by adoptive parents, specific to transracial adoption in the Western Cape, South Africa.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

In qualitative research, a research question is formulated in the beginning of the study to assist with providing focus and direction. (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011:33).

For this research, the researcher wanted to explore and describe what challenges are specific to transracial adoption. The question, therefore was:

**What are the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents?**

### **1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents.

The objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To explore policy documents and legislation pertaining to adoption in order to gain an understanding of the adoption process within the context of South African policy documents and legislation.
2. To describe transracial adoption within an ecological perspective and to identify possible challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents.
3. To investigate the challenges experienced by adoptive parents when adopting transracially.
4. To present conclusions based on the collected data and make recommendations for future research regarding challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents in South Africa.

### **1.5 THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE**

The theoretical point of departure framing the current research is the concept of the ecological perspective.

This study's point of departure is the individual (adoptive parent) and the individual in relation to their surrounding context on different levels. When adopting transracially, both the adopted child and the adoptive parents will be influenced by interrelationships and an accumulation of various ecologies. In this regard, the ecological perspective maintains that people are not only

affected by their characteristics, but also by their immediate social and physical environment, and by the interrelationship among the various settings of their immediate environment. People are further influenced by a broader social setting, such as economic processes, which in turn, are influenced by cultural attitudes and ideologies. (Atzaba-Poria, Pike & Deater-Deckard, 2004). Humans and the environment are connected and act reciprocally upon each other. In addition, human behaviours happen in the context of adapting to specific behaviour. Change takes place in terms of humans adapting to fit their environment. (Forte, 2007:512). An ecological perspective consists of five environmental systems with which an individual interacts. These systems are known as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. Throughout the process of adoption, interaction amongst these systems and environments takes place - prior to adoption, during the adoption process as well as post adoption. Examples of these are the adoptive family (microsystem), the family's informal network (mesosystem), the adoption agency (exosystem), the adoptive family's community (exosystem) and the biological parents (mesosystem).

The ecological perspective requires both adoptive parents and social workers alike to be more conscience of the systems that facilitate social functioning during adoption. A more in- depth account of the ecological perspective will be discussed in chapter 3 of the study, where the theories of Lewin (1952) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) will be examined in detail.

Using the ecological perspective as a framework for the study guided the research in order to gain a better understanding of the transracial adoptive parents' experiences, the skills they used to overcome their challenges and the support systems they turned to.

## **1. 6 KEY CONCEPTS**

### **1.6.1 Adoption**

Adoption is a legal process in which a child's legal rights and duties towards the natural parents, and vice versa, are terminated and similar rights and duties are created with respect to the child's adoptive parents (Owusu-Bempah, 2010:18). All paternal responsibilities and rights any person, including the parent, step-parent or partner in a domestic life partnership, had in respect of the child immediately before adoption, is terminated (Children's Act 38 of 2005:220).

### **1.6.2 Adoptive Parents**

In terms of the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 (2006:19), an adoptive parent is a person who has adopted a child in terms of the law.

### **1.6.3 Adoptable Child**

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 states that an adoptable child is one who is orphaned or has no guardian or caregiver who is willing to adopt the child; the whereabouts of the parent or guardians cannot be established; the child has been abandoned; the parent or guardian has abused or deliberately neglected the child, or has allowed the child to be abused or deliberately neglected; or the child is in need of a permanent alternative placement. (Children's Act 38 of 2005:208, 209).

### **1.6.4 Transracial Adoption**

According to Simon & Alstein (1996:5) transracial adoption is the practice of placing infants and children into families who are of a different race than the child's birth family. Similarly, transracial adoption is defined by Silverman (1993:104) as the joining of racially different parents and children together in adoptive families. Perry (2011:856) states that transracial adoption refers to the legal adoption of children by parents of another race, which may include international adoptions or adoptions involving any combination of races.

For the purposes of this study, transracial adoption was defined as the legal adoption of children by a parent/parents of another race. Although transracial adoption can involve any blend of race, in the South African context, transracial adoption typically refers to black children being adopted by white parents.

## **1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Literature Review**

According to Grinnell and Unrau (2005:46) a literature review creates a foundation for the research, based on existing knowledge. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport (2011:134) state several reasons for the importance of a literature study. Primarily, it reduces the chances of the researcher investigating what has already been investigated in a particular field. Kreuger and Neuman (2006:461) highlight that the researcher may benefit from the efforts of others by avoiding pitfalls and learning about existing tools and methods which may be beneficial to the him or her. The researcher has the opportunity, through thorough scrutiny of existing literature,

to learn more about the history, origin and scope of the research problem. (Grinnel and Unrau 2005:47). According to Kreuger and Neuman (2006:461), a good literature review places a research project in context by displaying how prior research is linked to the current project.

A comprehensive literature review was completed prior to the empirical study, in order to give an overview of the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents. The review justified the value and relevance of the study, as well as providing an understanding of transracial adoption within a South African context.

### **1.7.2 Research Approach**

The research approach the researcher used for this study, was the qualitative approach. This is in view of the fact that there seems to be limited literature on transracial adoption in South Africa, from the perspectives of the transracial adoptive parents.

Mc Laughlin (2012:35) defines qualitative research as “having the ability to look at processes over time, to understand the meanings of people and to adjust to new issues as they emerge”. De Vos *et al.* (2011:433) state that the qualitative researcher is “concerned with describing and understanding rather than explaining and predicting human behaviour; naturalistic behaviour rather than controlled measurement; and the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider, as opposed to an outsider perspective.” The researcher attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents, in order to describe rather than explain or predict their experiences. A qualitative approach was therefore suitable for this study.

According to Hennink *et al.* (2011:8); a researcher working from a qualitative research approach uses research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations to investigate people’s experiences in relation to a phenomenon from the perspective of the people themselves. Based on the fact that qualitative research is explorative and descriptive by nature, and is opted for to investigate a topic of a sensitive nature, the researcher used this approach for investigating the topic. The researcher collected data, which was obtained through in-depth interviews with adoptive parents, focusing on the challenges they experience regarding transracial adoption.

In logic, two broad methods of reasoning are used. They are known as deductive and inductive approaches. Deduction, or deductive reasoning, moves from the general to the specific and is sometimes informally called a “top-down” approach. Leedy & Ormrod (cited in De Vos *et al.*,

2011:48) state that a topic of interest can be narrowed down into a specific hypothesis which can be tested. Narrowing the hypothesis down even further enables the researcher to collect observations to address the hypothesis. This ultimately leads to being able to test the original theories with specific data – ultimately confirming or refuting original theories.

By comparison, inductive reasoning moves from the particular to the general and is informally known as a “bottom-up” approach (Babbie:2007:49). Inductive reasoning begins with a specific observation or measure, detects patterns and regularities, formulates some tentative hypotheses that can be explored, and finally develops general conclusions or theories (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:49).

This research study did not involve formulation of hypotheses, as a qualitative approach was employed. Rather, it began with a research question, as well as aims and objectives that needed to be achieved during the research process. The researcher therefore used the inductive approach for this study.

### **1.7.3 Research Design**

Monette, Sullivan and De Jongh (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:143) define research design as “a plan outlining how observations will be made and how the researcher will carry out a project”. In this study, an explorative, descriptive research design was used. Blaikie (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:94) describes explorative research as “a means used to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual”. The need for such research could arise due to limited information available on a certain topic or area of interest (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:95; Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2013:43). The design was therefore fitting to use for this study, as information on the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents is limited. Transracial adoption in South Africa is a phenomenon and additional knowledge regarding this topic would be beneficial to researchers, practitioners and families.

Kreuger and Neumann (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:96) state that descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting or relationship and focuses on the “how” and “why” questions. Furthermore, it can have a basic or applied research goal and may be qualitative or quantitative in nature. As previously indicated, research concerning adoption in South Africa is lacking - specifically about the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents. The use of descriptive research in this study explored the topic in more depth. Together with the exploratory research, descriptive research developed further knowledge with

regards to the topic of research as well as providing a description of the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents.

#### **1.7.4 Population, Sampling and Sampling Techniques**

According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:223) population refers to individuals within the universe who possess specific characteristics. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:132) add that the sample elements are drawn from a larger pool referred to as “the population”. The population for this study comprised of all transracial adoptive parents living within the municipal boundaries of Cape Town, Western Cape, at the time of adoption.

DePoy and Gilson; Druckman, Grinnel and Unrau, Kirk, Unrau, Gabor and Grinnel (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:228) state that a probability or random sample is one in which each person in the population has the same known probability to be representatively selected. This permits the researcher to calculate an estimate of the accuracy of the sample even before the study is done. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:118) state that in probability sampling the odds of selecting a particular individual are known and can be calculated. A non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling (also known as judgement sampling) was employed, as the researcher used her judgement to pursue participants who were information-rich because of their first-hand experience, knowledge and ability to describe the phenomenon under study (De Vos *et al.* 2011:392).

According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:233) snowball sampling involves approaching a single case that is involved in the phenomenon to be investigated in order to gain information on other similar persons. The researcher made contact with an organisation, Arise, who promote adoption and foster care. Services offered by Arise, include pre-adoption advise and post-placement support through facilitated groups. Arise is not a child placing agency and they therefore do not carry out any statutory work or facilitate adoptions. Their role is solely to offer quality family support through community organisation partnerships in resource-poor communities and creating and sustaining permanent and thriving family environments. The organisation agreed to assist the researcher in finding suitable participants for the research project. Arise e-mailed all contacts on their database and prospective participants were asked to contact the researcher directly via e-mail. Five participants contacted the researcher. These participants put the researcher in contact with other prospective participants, and a further fifteen participants were recruited in this manner, thereby making use of snowball sampling.



According to Grinnell and Unrau (2008:153), “a sample comprises elements or a subset of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which we are interested”. The researcher drew samples that comprised of elements that contained the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population that served the purpose of the study best.

Only participants who met the following criteria were included in the study:

- (1) Parent(s) who had adopted a child transracially and lived in the Western Cape.
- (2) Parent(s) whose transracially adopted child was between the ages of 2 to 10 years old.
- (3) Parent(s) who had adopted a child who was of a different race to the parent(s).
- (4) Parent(s) who were either in a heterosexual relationship or single. (If in a heterosexual relationship, one parent from each family was interviewed). Parents decided which one of them would be interviewed.
- (5) Parent(s) who had adopted a child transracially within the last 10 years.
- (6) Parent(s) who had adopted a child transracially, who were available and willing to participate in the study in that they were fully aware of what the study entailed, and participated of their own free will.

With reference to the sample size in qualitative research, it is customary not to determine the sample size at the outset of the study, but to allow the sample size to be determined by saturation. The researcher interviewed 20 participants, as it was at this point that data saturation occurred.

### **1.7.5 Instrument for Data Collection**

Data collection in the context of qualitative research, is defined as a systematic gathering of data for a particular purpose from varying sources, including questionnaires, interviews, observations, existing records and electronic devices (*Definition of data collection*, 2012). Du Plooy (2010:170) states that researchers in the social sciences collect data by way of measuring, questioning and observation.

For the purpose of collecting data from transracial adoptive parents on the challenges they experienced, the researcher proposed to use a semi-structured interview schedule. Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, Jarbandhan & Schutte and May in Morse (cited by De Vos *et al.*, 2011:348)

define semi-structured interviews as “those organised around particular areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope & depth”.

The researcher made use of questions included in an interview guide, which were open-ended and, therefore, flexible. DePoy and Gilson (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:342) describe interviewing as “the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. Researchers obtain information through direct interchange with an individual or a group that is known or expected to possess the knowledge they seek.” According to Alpaslan (2010:22) the open-ended interview takes the form of a conversation. The researcher’s intention was to explore the participant’s views, ideas, beliefs, attitudes and experiences about certain events or phenomenon.

In view of preparing the participants for data collection, the researcher proposed the following:

Interviews with participants who indicated their willingness to participate were arranged, where the purpose of the study and the format of the study was discussed with them. (The means of data collection ie: semi-structured interviews and the questions asked in the interview; the location where the interview took place and the approximate time the interview took). Ethical issues of confidentiality and permission to tape the interview were discussed. The researcher informed the participants that only the researcher and her supervisor would have access to the recordings and transcripts. Consent forms were handed to those participants who were in agreement, to sign. Following the signing of the consent forms, an appointment for the data collection was set up. During the interviews, the researcher made use of interview skills in order to get as much detail as possible about each question. The researcher listened attentively, requested clarification and used the skill of summarising. She did not ask leading questions and attempted not to interrupt the participants while they were speaking, but rather refocused them if they went off track from the issue being discussed. Interviews with the participants were recorded by means of a dictaphone, and transcripts were typed verbatim to ensure that valuable information was not lost. Field notes were used in an attempt to assist the researcher to record information accurately.

Data related to the study is kept in the researcher’s study at her home, in a safe, locked cabinet. Only the researcher has access to the safe cabinet. Soft copies of the data are stored on the researcher’s laptop, the password of which is only known to the researcher.

### 1.7.6 Data Analysis

According to De Vos *et al.* (2011:397), data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collection. In this respect, Schwandt (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:397) describes it as an activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorizing data. Stringer (2007:178) defines data analysis as the details of how research was analysed and interpreted and what procedures have been used to analyse, categorise and label data.

Creswell (cited by Alpaslan 2010:26) proposes that qualitative research cannot be analysed in a linear approach. He suggests that the researcher should rather work in analytical circles. These circles are completed through a series of steps, namely reading, memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting. These steps were applied by the researcher.

The researcher had planned to conduct the research from a qualitative approach. The analysis was therefore also done qualitatively. Patton, cited in De Vos *et al.* (2011:397) asserts that the purpose of qualitative analysis is to transform data into findings. The analysis involves reducing large volumes of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed. (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:397). The qualitative data was organised by the researcher into themes, sub-themes and categories in order to form the basis for an emerging story about the challenges experienced by adoptive parents.

### 1.7.7 Methods of Data Verification

#### 1.7.7.1 Validity and Reliability

According to Bryman (2012:46; 168), validity and reliability are two of the key means of evaluating social research. Reliability is “concerned with issues of consistency of measures”. Bryman adds that the concept of “dependability” is often used as an alternative to reliability in qualitative research. Researchers are encouraged to adopt an auditing process to ensure that all phases of the research process are kept. Peers could play a role in the process by acting as auditors. The researcher therefore transcribed all interviews with participants, which could be accessed on request.

Bryman (2012:168) states that “validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research”. Validity refers to whether an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept, actually measures that concept. In executing this study, the researcher focused on face validity, which, in the words of Bryman (2012:170), is

“when the measure apparently reflects the content of the concept in question”. This was executed by conducting a pilot study to determine whether the measure was reaching the concept that was the focus of attention. The pilot study was conducted successfully and the necessary changes were made to the semi-structured interview schedule.

#### 1.7.7.2 Trustworthiness

##### 1.7.7.2.1 Credibility

De Vos (2005:346) states that credibility is the strength of a qualitative study. Credibility is regarded as an alternative for internal validity. An in-depth data description within the parameters of population and theoretical frameworks indicates that research is valid. Boundaries should therefore be placed around the study, with the researcher clearly stating the parameters. In this study theoretical frameworks (Chapters 1 and 3) and the parameters of the population (Chapters 1 and 4) were presented and the data described (Chapter 5).

##### 1.7.7.2.2 Transferability

Transferability is regarded as the alternative for external validity. This suggests that findings could be used in other settings and populations. Theoretical parameters of the research are set by the researcher revisiting the theoretical frameworks to indicate how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models. In this study the theoretical approach directed the way in which data was collected and analysed. The findings of this study could be transferred to other research on transracial adoption. (De Vos, 2005:346). Recommendations of this study could also be useful for prospective adoptive parents and social workers alike.

##### 1.7.7.2.3 Dependability

Dependability is the alternative for reliability in which the researcher attempts to account for changes in the phenomenon chosen for the study. Inquiries cannot be effortlessly replicated to another set of conditions, as the social environment is always being constructed (De Vos, 2005:346). For this study, the researcher did not have to make any changes which may have compromised the dependability of the study.

##### 1.7.7.2.4 Conformability

Conformability is the alternative for objectivity. Conformability of a study implies that the study findings could be confirmed by someone other than the researcher (De Vos, 2005:346). All narratives in Chapter 4 were the participants' own words, with no changes were made by

the researcher. All themes, sub-themes and categories identified in Chapter 4 also have literature control. This indicates that this study's findings conform with previous research.

### **1.7.8 Pilot Study**

Barker (2003:327-328) defines a pilot study as “a procedure for testing and validating an instrument by administering it to a small group of participants from the intended test population”. Bless *et al.* (2007:184) supplement this definition by describing a pilot study as “a small study conducted prior to a larger piece of research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate”. The researcher carried out a pilot study with three participants before the main study was implemented. The questionnaire was altered slightly to incorporate questions which the pilot study participants introduced as themes during their interviews.

## **1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1.8.1 Ethical Clearance**

According to Alston, Bowles & Ginsberg (cited in De Vos *et al.*, 2011:126), institutional ethics committees (IECs) or institutional review boards (IRBs), review research proposals at universities, research institutions and major welfare organisations, according to strict guidelines and procedures, prior to the research going ahead.

This research study was executed under the guidance and supervision of the Social Work Department at the University of Stellenbosch. The proposal was presented to the Department of Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) of the Department of Social Work for approval as medium risk research and ethical clearance was granted for the study.

### **1.8.2 Ethical Issues**

#### **1.8.2.1 Avoidance of harm**

Babbie (cited by De Vos *et al.*, 2011:115) states that the fundamental ethical rule of social research is that it must bring no harm to the participants. Creswell (2003:64) states that the researcher has an ethical obligation to protect participants within all possible limits, from any physical discomfort which may be develop as a result from partaking in the research project.

This study was considered medium risk, as the study participants were transracial adoptive parents who were sharing the challenges they had experienced, with the researcher. Certain themes which emerged during the interviews could have been sensitive to certain participants. The researcher was obliged to protect all participants before they participated in the research, by informing them of any possible risk involved in the research. Such information gave the participants an opportunity to be eliminated from the study beforehand. In an attempt to protect the participants from emotional harm when sharing sensitive experiences, the researcher structured questions in such a manner as to move from the general to more specific questions. However, had the impact of the experiences the participants shared during the interview caused them emotional harm, the organisation (Arise) would have ensured that debriefing and counselling was arranged with a registered social worker or psychologist either at Arise premises, or at a venue selected by the participants. Should the participants have felt uncomfortable receiving counselling from a registered social worker or psychologist associated with Arise, Danielle Meintjies, a social worker in private practice, who specialises in clinical social work with adopted families, offered debriefing and counselling to the participants at a venue decided on by the participants in need. Fortunately, none of the participants suffered emotional harm and therefore did not feel the need to debrief after the interview.

#### 1.8.2.2 Voluntary Participation

De Vos *et al.* (2011:116) state that participants should always be voluntary and should not be forced to take part in the research project.

Prior to the study commencing, the researcher informed participants that their decision to participate was based entirely on their choice and they could choose to discontinue at any stage during the process. None of the participants chose to withdraw from the study.

#### 1.8.2.3 Informed Consent

Royse, Williams, Tutty (cited in De Vos *et al.* 2011:117) state that, “obtaining informed consent implies that all possible or adequate information on the goal of the investigation; the expected duration of the participant’s involvement; the procedures which will be followed during the investigation; the possible advantages, disadvantages and dangers to which respondents may be exposed; as well as the credibility of the researcher, be rendered to potential subjects or their legal representatives.”

As suggested by Hakim (2000:143), written informed consent was used in this study. A clear explanation of what was expected of the participants was discussed, in order to give them the opportunity to make an informed choice to participate in the study voluntarily. The informed consent process included explaining the purpose and goals of the study to the participants. Procedures and the semi-structured interview schedule were also explained to the participants. The interview schedule, confidentiality and the completion of the schedule during a one-to-one interview with the researcher was discussed, as well as potential risks and discomforts, and the options of debriefing and counselling. In addition, benefits of the study in the sharing of knowledge were explained to the participants, alongside the fact that no payment would be received from participating in the study. Finally, confidentiality and the choice to withdraw from the study without penalty was discussed with participants. Thereafter, participants were provided with consent documents to be read through and signed. These documents are kept in a secured file.

#### 1.8.2.4 Compensation

No compensation in any form, was given to the participants.

#### 1.8.2.5 Confidentiality

Babbie (cited by De Vos *et al.* 2011:120) explains confidentiality as a means of only the researcher and a few members of staff being aware of the identity of the participants. In the context of this study, only the researcher was aware of the identity of the participants. No identifying information was obtained from the participants, which prevented them from being identified through personal information.

## 1.9 LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. Firstly, all participants were from the White population group. A study incorporating participants from the Coloured and Black population groups would provide more inclusive results when gaining insights into the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents in South Africa. Secondly, the gender of all participants was female. Incorporating male participants or both male and female participants as couples, could provide alternative insights into the research topic. Thirdly, the study was carried out in the

Western Cape. Similar studies would have to be carried out in the other provinces of South Africa in order to gain comprehensive insight into the topic.

Furthermore, as indicated earlier in this chapter, literature on transracial adoption in the South African context is limited. Due to the fact that such adoption was only legalised in South Africa in 1991 and the current Children's Act 38 of 2005 was only assented to in June 2006, it was challenging to find studies on adoption in the South African context. Lastly, since the study was of a qualitative nature, it would be difficult to generalise findings to settings not studied.

## **1.10 PRESENTATION**

Chapter 1 comprised of the research proposal, which was approved by the Ethical Screening Committee of the Department of Social Work.

Chapter 2 addressed objective 1 of the study by providing a description of the policy and legislation related to adoption in South Africa.

Chapter 3 focused on the objective 2 by exploring challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents from an ecological perspective.

Chapter 4 aimed to meet objective three and presented the empirical study which sought to investigate the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents in Cape Town, South Africa.

Chapter 5 attended to the objective 4 by presenting conclusions and recommendations based on the collected data and made recommendations for future research with regards to transracial adoption in South Africa.



## **CHAPTER 2**

# **ADOPTION: LEGISLATION AND POLICY WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The following chapter addresses the first objective of this study, which is to explore transracial adoption within the context of South African policy documents and legislation. Due to the growing number of black and coloured children being placed for adoption and an overwhelmingly large portion of adoptive parents being white, the need for legalization of transracial adoption became critical in South Africa. The chapter begins by providing a brief history of the development of legislation pertaining to adoption in South Africa. Current legislation and policy related to adoption in the South Africa context is then explored. The care and protection of children related to adoption as specified in the Children's Act 38 of 2005 is subsequently discussed. Finally, in order to better understand adoption in South Africa, the process is briefly discussed, focusing on the parties involved.

Adoption is an ancient arrangement as, according to the Bible, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and Babylonians all had adoption systems. Children were transferred from biological parents to adoptive parents for various reasons. Although some adoptive parents wanted to create or increase their family, others opted to take on children for political alliances, for inheritance, for future marriage or to care for elderly parents. These adoptions were not conducted in the interests of children, as orphaned or abandoned children often became slaves. Rowen (n.d.)

Ancient adoptions in the Roman Empire mostly involved adult males and the aristocracy. Wealthy families who could not produce sons, would adopt older boys or men to provide them with male heirs. Several Roman emperors, including Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius, were adopted. As bloodlines became paramount for inheritance in the Middle Ages, adoption declined. During this time, the Catholic Church began encouraging adoptions in the interest of abandoned and orphaned children, establishing homes and standards of treatment for these children. The process of adoption has changed significantly since then, and is now regulated by laws, which ensure that the best interests of the child are met (Children's Act 38 of 2005:18). Several authors have remarked that determining the best interest of the child can be a challenging task (Davies, 2011:52; Ferreira, 2009:119, 246; Thoburn, 1998:190). Section 7

of the Children's Act 38 (2005:20) specifies the factors to be considered when determining a child's best interests. This detailed information is instrumental in assisting adoption social workers in South Africa in their decision making processes regarding children (Doubell, 2014:41).

Adoption is a legal process which permanently gives parental rights to adoptive parents. Children are permanently placed into the care of a family that is not their biological family due to the fact that their biological family is either unwilling or unable to care for them (McRoy, Grotevant & White, 1998:1).

Adoption can be defined as a judicial process in which the legal obligations and rights of a child towards the biological parents are terminated and new rights and obligations are created between a child and the adoptive parents. Adoption involves the creation of the parent-child relationship between individuals who are not naturally related. The adopted child is given the rights, privileges and duties of a child and heir by the adoptive family. An adult assumes the role of the parent for a child other than his or her own biological offspring through the process of adoption. Informal adoptions occur when a relative or step-parent assumes permanent parental responsibilities without court involvement. However, legally recognised adoptions require a court or other government agency to award permanent custody of a child (or, occasionally, an older individual) to adoptive parents. Specific requirements for adoption vary among countries (Mathur, 2012).

In South Africa, rates of adoption remain low while the number of orphaned and abandoned children continues to rise. According to Mokamane & Rochat (2011) foster care has increased over the last decade, but unfortunately so have the number of children placed in residential care. According to UNICEF South Africa (2010), data on children in residential care is both sparse and inconsistent. Although statistics on children in institutional care are not complete, it is known that there are 345 registered children's homes in South Africa, looking after some 21 000 children. Due to the fact that there are large number of unregistered homes, this estimate is thought to be an underestimation. Children are commonly placed in residential care facilities as a result of abuse and neglect (30%), abandonment (24%) or orphaning (11%). The majority of HIV-affected children are absorbed within extended families, which places immense strain on these family systems.

The rising number of abandoned children is thought to be due to social, economic, political and material factors such as poverty; lack of family support; child abuse and neglect; rape; teenage

pregnancies; parental ill-health; HIV and AIDS; and family breakdown (Barn and Kirton, 2012:25; Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2013:3; Administrator, 2001). Blackie (2014) adds that although cultural beliefs which discourage termination of parental rights results in low adoption rates, the absence of adoption subsidies also plays a role.

When left without parental or familial care, the state becomes responsible for the child. In order to ensure that the child's needs are met, intervention on the part of the state needs to take place. Mokomane & Rochat (2010:vii) maintain that adoption is one form of intervention that has been recognised as being a favourable option for children who have been abandoned or orphaned.

## **2.2 POLICY GOVERNING ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In order to gain a better understanding of the documents which influence adoption, it is necessary to explore international, national and regional policy. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a Child and the White Paper for Social Welfare will therefore be discussed in the section below.

### **2.2.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child**

The UNCRC is the most widely recognised and ratified human rights treaty, which frameworks the rights of children under the age of 18 years. It is considered to be the foundation of children's rights globally. Since 1995 when South African ratified this convention, the country has been legally bound to implement it. The ratification of the UNCRC ensured that children's rights are the force of international as well as domestic law. The UNCRC is based on the principle that children are born with fundamental freedoms and the rights of all human beings but with needs exclusive to them, due to their vulnerability. In terms of article 3(1) of the Convention, the best interests of the child is of crucial consideration in all proceedings concerning children. The UNCRC acknowledges the role of family and parents in the care and protection of children, as well as the obligation of the state to assist them in carrying out these duties (Proudlock, 2014). The Convention further states that the family is the fundamental group in society and growth and well-being of all its members flourish in the family environment. A child should, where possible, be cared for by their parents. Separation from parents should be a last resort and should only ensue when it is in the best interest of the child. (Ferreira, 2009:91). However, when separation from biological parents is necessary in

protecting the best interest of the child, adoption is a form of permanent care which offers the child the opportunity to become part of a family and experience parental care which may not have been afforded prior to adoption (Ferreira, 2014).

### **2.2.2 The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**

Inspired by the Convention, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child entered into force on 29 November 1999. Both the Convention and Charter provide the framework through which children and their welfare are discussed in Africa (Ferreira, 2009:97).

The Charter recognises that the child is an important member of African society and that for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Articles 15, 16, 21, 25 and 26 refer to the rights of the child to protection from labour, abuse, torture, harmful social and cultural practices and sexual abuse. The right to special assistance if deprived of a family environment is also indicated (Proudlock, 2014). Article 24 of the Charter obliges State Parties which recognise the system of adoption, to ensure that the best interest of the child shall be the paramount consideration (African Union, n.d).

In comparison to the Convention, protection for children in the Charter is strengthened in that it proclaims its supremacy over any custom, tradition, cultural or religious practice that is not consistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the Charter (Ferreira, 2009:97).

### **2.2.3 The White Paper for Social Welfare**

Soanes & Stevenson (2009:1646) define a white paper as “a government report giving information or proposals on an issue”. The White Paper for Social Welfare focuses on key substantive issues within South Africa’s social welfare system, which require restructuring of social welfare services, programmes and social security. It outlines the principles, guidelines, recommendations and proposed policies and programmes for future action, in order for a developmental social welfare system to be established and to operate efficiently and effectively in South Africa (White Paper for Social Welfare of RSA, 1997:1,8).

The following sections of the White Paper relate to adoption in South Africa:

### 2.2.3.1 Adoption as an option for abandoned children

The White Paper acknowledges that thousands of children are abandoned by their parents in South Africa. Furthermore, large numbers of children are placed in residential and foster care (White Paper for Social Welfare of RSA, 1997:61). Although the White Paper remarks on the fact that adoption is the most cost-effective means of permanency planning for abandoned children, it acknowledges that adoption was under-utilized in 1997. As well as providing children who are without care with permanency and stability, adoption also offers the state some financial relief when providing for orphaned and abandoned children.

At the time of the White Paper being formulated, section 1(22) indicated that the adoption system did not adequately meet the needs of abandoned children. The White Paper consequently called for an extensive reform of legislature governing the care of the child and adoption. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 was therefore developed. It was seen as an essential task for the South African Law Reform Commission and serves to provide the practice of adoption with more structure.

### 2.2.3.2 Adoption as a means of protection and prevention of harm to children

Section 1(147) of The White Paper focuses specifically on adoption and defines adoption as, “a child protection and preventative service, and an effective means of permanency planning for children whose families of origin are unable to care for them” (White Paper for Social Welfare of RSA, 1997:66). Adoption in cases of abandonment can be regarded as a preventative measure as its objective is to ensure that young children who would have grown up in the child-care and protection system have the opportunity to experience normal early childhood development. Protection from further psychosocial harm and promoting the child's general wellbeing can be achieved if adoption of the child is carried out as soon as possible (White Paper for Social Welfare of RSA, 1997:66).

### 2.2.3.3 Adoption as a means of permanency planning for children

According to the White Paper, adoption is a plan of permanency for children whose biological families are not able to care for them. (White Paper for Social Welfare of RSA, 1997:66). Literature by Child Welfare Information Gateway (n.d.) corresponds with this information by stating that permanency in child welfare can have various meanings, depending on the child, family and case circumstances. Child welfare professionals first focus on supporting and

stabilizing a family in an attempt to prevent initial placement in a care facility. Reunification with their families is the preferred outcome for children who are removed from their families and placed in foster care. Permanency planning focuses on returning children who have been placed in care to ensure their safety, to their families as soon as possible. Alternatively, they are placed with another legally permanent family, such as relatives, adoptive families who obtain legal custody or guardians. Permanency also means maintaining or establishing meaningful connections with other caring adults in the child's life (relational permanency). Permanency planning aims to keep the time spent in foster care to a minimum. McDonald, Press, Billings and Moore (2007:6) affirm that this is achieved through reunification with the biological family or by means of adoption.

Although adoption was seen as an underutilised option, the situation has not changed. According to the 2016 review of the White Paper, adoptions have declined by 50% since 2004. One of the factors discouraging adoption, is that there is no subsidised adoption in South Africa, although this was considered an area in need of attention in 1997. The Department of Social Development's alternative care policy of 2007 notes that subsidised adoption has been successful in some other countries for older children whose placement is problematic due to disability, medical problems and chronic illness. However, DSD's 2013 status report on social welfare transformation for the Ministerial Committee notes that, "subsidised adoption was considered but not supported as it would change the whole nature of adoption and have many unintended consequences". (Comprehensive Report on the Review of the White Paper 1997, 2016:168)

The Comprehensive Report on the Review of the White Paper 1997 (2016:168) states that the South African Council for Social Services Professionals (SACSSP) is currently reviewing the regulations for adoptions. The person must have a recognised qualification in social work, be registered with SACSSP as a social worker and must have the necessary experience and/or qualifications. (Unfortunately in South Africa, there is currently no honours or masters qualifications in adoption available). Adoption fees to professional service providers are regulated, and in 2005 the maximum fee for adoption was R36 000.00 (Comprehensive Report on the Review of the White Paper 1997, 2016:168).

Currently DSD is responsible for accrediting adoption social workers. Although in 2011 there was a suggestion that SACSSP would participate in this process, it had not yet transpired. SACSSP's Professional Conduct Division receives voluminous complaints of applications for

accreditation by DSD. Delays in accreditation result in delays in approval of adoptions. (Comprehensive Report on the Review of the White Paper 1997, 2016:168)

## **2.3 HISTORY OF ADOPTION LEGISLATION SOUTH AFRICA**

As previously mentioned, adoption has taken place through the ages. Although the process was at first informal in South Africa, it later became regulated by laws (Ferreira, 2009:13). In order to understand adoption in South Africa, it is essential to have an understanding of the historical development of South African legislation as it relates to adoption. Unfortunately, due to the lack of literature pertaining to legislation regarding adoption in South Africa, information is based predominantly on three sources, namely Ferreira (2009), Van der Walt (2014) and Doubell (2014).

### **2.3.1 Dutch Law**

South African law was based on Roman-Dutch principles as well as being influenced by English legal principles. Dutch law did not recognise adoption, which resulted in no adoptions being recorded in South Africa, prior to adoption legislation coming into effect in 1923. Although informal adoptions must have taken place, adoption was not a recognised legal institution in South Africa until 1923, when the Adoption of Children Act came into effect (Ferreira, 2009:19).

### **2.3.2 Adoption of Children Act 25 of 1923**

The aim of the Adoption of Children Act was to provide exclusively for the adoption of children. It was the first piece of legislation in South Africa to regulate adoption. As previously stated, Roman-Dutch law did not recognise adoption prior to 1923. No record of adoption existed. The Act was promulgated in the Government Gazette and came into operation on 1 January 1924 (Van der Walt, 2014).

According to Ferreira (2009), the South African legislature made every attempt to ensure the protection of adopted children. The adoption of a child was confirmed by a magistrate, only if the welfare and interests of the child would be promoted by the adoption. Interestingly, the Act did not disallow transracial or intercultural adoption. There was no indication that race or culture had to be considered in any way before adoption could take place. Although it was



therefore possible to have a legally binding transracial and/or intercultural adoption, these were unlikely to have taken place. It has to be assumed that this aspect was not regulated because the legislature probably did not even consider the possibility of anyone wanting to adopt a child of a race or culture different to their own.

Maylam (2001:99) states that racial segregation under Dutch and British colonial rule had begun in South Africa prior to the general election which took place in 1948. This segregation would have made it unlikely for most South Africans to have considered adopting a child of a different race and legislation prohibiting trans-racial adoption was therefore not required. The Adoption of Children Act became outdated and was replaced by the Children's Act of 1937.

### **2.3.3 The Development of Adoption in Customary Law**

The development of adoption in customary law is a private arrangement that involves only the families concerned. The relatives of the adopted child and the adoptive parents are involved in the adoption process. The child's biological father and the adoptive parents must enter into an agreement and should notify their traditional ruler or chief, of the adoption. Although the biological mother needs to be informed of the adoption, the decision about the adoption rests with the biological father and his family, who may ignore the wishes of the mother. The validity of an act of adoption in terms of customary law thus largely depends on the agreement between the two families. Once adopted, the child becomes, for all intents and purposes, the child of the adoptive parents (Ferreira, 2009:23).

Van der Walt (2014) adds that under customary law, the development of adoption is the solution sought by a man who has no sons or no heir to inherit property and carry on the deceased's family name. Where a family head has no sons, he may adopt a boy for the express purpose of making the child his heir. He will usually try to obtain the sons of a closely related family head in his own family group. Another reason for adoption in customary law may be to strengthen the adoptive family with more children, or to safeguard the interests of the child in the case where the child's biological parents cannot afford to maintain the child. Both males and females may adopt a child in terms of customary law and both boys and girls may be adopted.

Although the process of customary adoption has the same legal consequences as statutory adoption, there are significant differences in customary adoption and common-law adoption in South Africa (Ferreira, 2009:20). In reflecting on the custody and care of children in Africa,



many children have what may be termed as foster parents. The children retain their original legal status, family name and rights and duties acquired by birth in the father's home, but are under the custody and control of the "foster" parents (Bekker, 2008:399). Social parentage is common, as many parents live away from their children at places of employment, even though migrant labour is supposed to have come to an end when apartheid was terminated. Other family members take over the role of parent. This role is often entrusted to peers, especially in situations where children are left parentless due to AIDS. Although this should assist in alleviating the plight of children in need of care, problems may arise in that the caregiver does not have legal capacity, neither at common law nor in terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Bekker, 2008:399).

Bekker (2008:400) notes that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 has introduced some confusion with regards to customary law. In terms of section 1(1) an "adopted child" means a child adopted by a person in terms of any law, which would include customary law. Section 212(3) of the Constitution provides that "the courts must apply customary law when that law is applicable, subject to the Constitution and any legislation that specifically deals with customary law". Section 28 seemingly precludes customary law adoptions and states that a child is adopted if the child has been placed in the permanent care of a person in terms of a court order that has the effects contemplated in section 242. Subsection (3) provides that:

"An adopted child must for all purposes be regarded as the child of the adopted parent and the adoptive parent must for all purposes be regarded as the parent of the adoptive child".

According to Bekker (2008:400), this appears to apply to adoptions in terms of the Act only. But as the Children's Act does not specifically deal with customary law, it can be assumed that acknowledgement of customary adoptions as outlined above, prevails. Adoption in terms of a court order as considered in section 228 is meant to bring about adoption and regulate the effect of such an order. Many African children could be deprived of a birth name and status should this order not be recognized. It would also deprive an adopted child in terms of customary law from the right to inherit from his or her adoptive parents. Under no circumstances would that be in the best interests of the child.

### **2.3.4 Children's Act 31 of 1937**

The Children's Act of 1937 came into operation on 18 May 1937. The aim of the Act was much wider than that of the Adoption of Children Act. It addressed all issues relating to children, not just adoption. An adoption was affected by an order of a children's court of the district in which the adopted child resided and the court could not grant such application unless it was satisfied that the proposed adoption would serve the interests and was conducive to the welfare of the child (Van der Walt, 2014).

Although the Act did stipulate that the court had to be satisfied that the applicants were fit and proper to be entrusted with the custody of the child, it contained no reference to race or culture and therefore did not prohibit transracial adoption. Mosikatsana (cited by Ferreira, 2009:28) believes that, "this omission was because racism was already so firmly embedded in the national psyche that it was assumed that there was no need for legislative intervention in this regard." The Children's Act of 1937 was in turn replaced by the Children's Act of 1960.

### **2.3.5 Children's Act 33 of 1960**

This Act came into operation on 14 April 1960. It was wide in its scope and defined a child as any person, including an infant, who was under the age of eighteen years. Since the legislative introduction in South African, this was the first Act to make reference to race regarding adoption. Although various legislative interventions aimed at racial segregation had been introduced, this was the first Act in which race was brought into the parent-child relationship (Van der Walt, 2014).

Although previous Acts had made no mention of trans-racial adoption, it had not been against the law. However, with the sanctioning of the Children's Act 33 of 1960, transracial adoption became illegal. The terms "culture" and "ethnological grouping" were introduced into South African adoption legislation for the first time. Section 35(2), later to become section 35(2)(a), read:

In selecting any person in whose custody a child is to be placed...regard shall be had to the religious and cultural background and ethnological grouping of the child and, in selecting such a person, also to the nationality of the child and the relationship between him and such a person.

The Children's Amendment Act of 1965 added two further subsections to section 35(2), namely subsections 35(2)(b) and 35(2)(c). The subsections read as follows:

(b) Any illegitimate child whose classification in terms of the Population Registration Act, 1950 (Act 30 of 1950), is the same as that of his mother shall be deemed to have the same religious and cultural background and nationality as his mother and only relatives of the mother of any such child shall be regarded as being related to such a child.

(c) A child shall not be placed in the custody of any person whose classification in terms of the Population Registration Act, 1950, is not the same as that of a child except where such a person is the parent or guardian of the child.

Therefore, for the first time, section 35(2)(c) of the Children's Amendment Act of 1965, strictly prohibited transracial adoption in South Africa.

### **2.3.6 Child Care Act 74 of 1983**

Ferreira (2009:34) states that the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 did not bring about any significant changes regarding transracial adoption. When originally enacted, Section 40 of the Act read as follows:

(a) regard shall be had to the religious and cultural background of the child concerned and of his parents as against that of the person in or to whose custody he is to be placed or transferred; and

(b) a child shall not be placed in or transferred to the custody of any person whose classification in terms of the Population Registration Act, 1950, is not the same as that of the child, except where such person is the parent or guardian of the child.

In 1991 section 40(b) of the Child Care Act was rescinded and transracial adoptions became a reality in South Africa. Although Section 40(a), dealing with adoption across cultural or religious boundaries was retained, Section 40 was altered to read as follows:

...regard shall be had to the religious and cultural background of the child concerned and of his parents as against that of the person in or to whose custody he is to be placed or transferred.

The Child Care Act 74 of 1983 was replaced by the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

## **2.4 CURRENT LEGISLATION GOVERNING ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

South Africa's legislative approach to child protection has its roots in the Anglophone child protection model. This is one of three models of child protection identified by Cameron and Freymond. The other two models identified, are community social services approach and community care (Patel, 2015:210). According to Tassone & Ray (2012) in many African

countries, the Anglophone child protection statutory model was put in place prior to independence, without adaptation to the cultural, political and economic context of the country. Schmid (2012) states that the child protection model is criticised for being overly focused on individual level interventions to address potential harm and risk to children. It is based on a “deficit” approach that is invasive, penalising and involves investigative observation of parents, especially mothers.

While major changes have occurred in child and family services, the Anglophone model of child protection remains dominant. Schmid (2012) argues that the system is still oriented towards statutory child protection intervention and has not been significantly reoriented towards the developmental approach. Welfare systems that are over-reliant on child protection tend to ignore the structural barriers that hinder parents and caregivers in their caring roles. Drawing on international experience, Bunting and Reid (cited by Patel, 2015:211) argue that these barriers are not acknowledged and that out-of-home placements are over-utilised. An over-reliance on statutory provision of the child welfare system is considered to fail children and there is need for the system to be transformed (Schmid, 2012).

#### **2.4.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa**

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, was approved by the Constitutional Court on 4 December 1996 and took effect on 4 February 1997. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land and no other law or government action can supersede the provisions of the Constitution (Constitution of RSA, 1996:1243).

The Bill of Rights (Chapter 2 of the Constitution) is the cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It protects the rights of all people living in South Africa and upholds the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. Chapter 2, section 28 is relevant to this study as it outlines the rights of a child. Chapter 2, subsection 1(b) states that every child has a right to family or parental care; or appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment (Constitution of RSA, 1996:8). As the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 makes provision for the rights of a child to have access to alternative care when the biological family is unable or unwilling to care for the child, it can be considered to be Constitutional (Doubell, 2014:34).

Section 28, subsection 2 of the Constitution states that, “A child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child”. Correspondingly, the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 states that, “In all matters concerning the care, protection and well-being of a

child the standard that the child's best interest is of paramount importance, must be applied" (Constitution of RSA, 1996:1255; Ferreira, 2009:36).

Section 31 of the Constitution specifies that no person should be denied the right to belong to a culture, religious or linguistic community. Furthermore, persons may enjoy their culture, practice their religion, use their language and are free to form associations related to these. The aforementioned rights pertain to all South Africans, including children (Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 2014). Transracial adoptive parents therefore have a responsibility to permit their adopted children to be exposed to their cultural roots.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the South African Constitution correlate on matters pertaining to children and adoption.

#### **2.4.2 The Children's Act 38 of 2005**

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 currently sets out the legal framework for adoptions in South Africa. The aim of the Act was to improve certain aspects of childcare in South Africa. It is apparent when comparing adoption legislation of the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, that the Children's Act 38 of 2005 is the more comprehensive of the two. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 has 26 sections allocated to adoption (excluding inter-country adoptions), whereas the Child Care Act 74 of 1983, only has 11 sections (Ferreira, 2009:36).

Van der Walt (2014) asserts that the Act was assented to on 8 June 2005. Certain provisions of the Act came into operation on 1 July 2007, but the remaining provisions became operative in April 2010. Amongst the latter were Chapter 15 (26 sections, dealing with matters relating to adoption) and Chapter 16 (20 sections on inter-country adoption). Although the legal effect of an adoption order is the same as it was in the 1983 Act, major changes were affected to the existing legislation regarding the process of adoption.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 provides new developments and procedures in order to change adoption practice and expand possibilities for adoption in South Africa. Doubell (2013:31) notes that as well as offering a definition of adoption, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 explains the purpose of adoption and defines which children are adoptable and who may adopt these children. Persons who may adopt have been expanded upon to include single/unmarried people, gay couples, couples in life partnerships; foster parents and biological fathers of

children born out of wedlock. In this regard, Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela (2013) add that certain adoption agencies are willing to screen adopters up to the age of approximately 55 due to the fact that many black adopters who are infertile will only make the decision to adopt an unrelated child after they have raised a related child. The Act clearly defines issues such as consent to adoption; when consent is not needed; and rescission orders (Doubell, 2014:31).

According to Van der Walt (2014), the Register on Adoptable Children and Prospective Parents (RACAP) is probably the single most important innovation of the Act. RACAP creates an integrated approach to the screening and matching of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents.

As previously stated, South Africa is faced with the challenge of an increasing number of orphans and children who are vulnerable and in need of care and placement. Both the Children's Rights Charter (1989) and the Constitution (1996) emphasise the principle that every child has the right to family life or appropriate alternative care. Adoption is clearly a potential solution to these children.

The "best interests" of the child is of paramount importance and outweighs any other consideration. "Best interests" include the child's right to security, need for affection, and stability. These factors should be the basis for any adoption plan. Section 157(3) provides that adoption should be considered a desirable option. Children who can most benefit are abandoned, neglected, abused and orphaned children (Van der Walt, 2014).

## **2.5 A CHILD IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION**

Section 150 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines the circumstances which would cause a child to be considered "in need of care and protection" (Children's Act 38, 2005:142). Subsection 1(a) states that any child who has been orphaned or abandoned without any visible means of support should be considered to be in need of care and protection.

### **2.5.1 The right to be cared for**

Every child has the right to care and protection. Objectives stated by both the South African Constitution, section 28(b) and the Children's Act 38 of 2005, section 2(b)(i), ensure that every child has family and/or parental care. If the child has been removed from the family, an

appropriate alternative should be provided (Children's Act 38, 2005:33; Constitution of RSA 108, 1996:1255).

Ferreira (2009:238) supplements this information by stating that part of the Preamble of the Children's Act 28 of 2005 states that the child should grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding in order for the full and harmonious development of his/her personality to take place. Section 7(1)(k) recognises that the child needs to be raised within a stable and caring family environment and provides clear guidelines about the kind of family environment the child needs.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 stipulates that the goal is to provide a stable and caring family environment for an orphaned or abandoned child rather than simply providing an alternative family. In honouring the best interests of the child, the aim is to provide a child with a family; not to provide a family with a child. Ferreira (2009:239) cautions that adoption decisions need to be carefully considered. In particular cases, transracial adoption can provide more stability and be more appropriate for a child than a same-race adoption.

Literature confirms that children who are in alternative care are predominantly black. However, adoption by black South Africans is significantly underutilised (Gerrand & Nathane-Tauela, 2013:1,4; Harber, 1999:9 and Mokomane et al., 2012:352). In order to experience a sense of unity with an alternative family, transracial adoption may be the only alternative for many children.

### **2.5.2 An adoptable child**

Section 230, subsection 3 of the Children's Act (2005:75) states that a child is adoptable if:

- a. The child is an orphan and has no guardian or caregiver who is willing to adopt the child;
- b. The whereabouts of the child's parents or guardian cannot be established;
- c. The child has been abandoned;
- d. The child's parent or guardian has abused or deliberately neglected the child, or has allowed the child to be abused or deliberately neglected; or
- e. The child is in need of a permanent alternative placement.

With the introduction of the Register on Adoptable Children and Prospective Adoptive Parents (RACAP), the Children's Act 38 of 2005 has created a method of screening and matching adoptable children with prospective adoptive parents. RACAP is intended to facilitate in the

matching and screening process in order to ensure that children eligible for unrelated adoption are not uprooted from their ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origins (Portfolio Committee on Social Development, cited by Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2015). An adoptable child's details are placed with RACAP for at least 60 days. If he or she is not yet matched with a fit and proper adoptive parent in South Africa, the child becomes eligible for transracial or international adoption (Davel & Skelton, 2009).

## **2.6. BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD**

According to Skelton (2009) the "best interests of the child" is a universal standard which as its origins in family law. However, it has recently spread to all other areas of the law to become a guiding principle in decisions to be made in matters concerning children.

Davies (2011:50, 52) describes the "best interests of the child" as being the basis upon which all human rights legislature related to care of the child is based. In South Africa, statutory adoptions are currently dealt with in terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Both section 230(1)(a) and section 240(2)(a) stipulate that adoptions can only proceed if the proposed adoption will serve in the best interests of the child. Similarly, both the Children's Act 38 (2005:18) and article 28 of the South African Constitution (Constitution of RSA 108, 1996:1255) emphasise safeguarding the best interest of the child as one of its main objectives. This requirement has to be met before the adoption order is granted (Ferreira, 2009:36).

Section 7 of the Children's Act 38 (2005:20) lists 14 factors that are required to be taken into consideration when implementing the "best interest of the child" standard. (Children's Act 38, 2005:20, 21, 22). These factors are an essential resource as they assist the social worker in determining whether an adoption would be in the best interest of the child or not. The social worker is therefore able to ensure that each adoption is in the best interest of the child (Doubell, 2014:41). A factor which plays an integral part in these decisions made by the social worker, is choosing the type of adoption which would be in the child's best interest.

## **2.7. TYPES OF ADOPTION**

Both internationally and in South Africa there are various different types of adoption. Prospective adoptive parents need to decide which type of adoption is best for them. Similarly,



social workers have to decide which type of adoption would be in the best interest of each particular child.

**National adoption** is a legal adoption facilitated by an accredited adoption social worker and/or organisation where both the adoptive child and parent(s) are South African citizens or have permanent residence in South Africa (Administrator 2001).

**Related adoption** is adoption of a child by a person who is related to the child. Related adoptions include step-parent adoptions; adoption by a biological father who is not married to the mother; or adoption by family members such as aunts, uncles and grandparents (Mokomane et al., 2012:350; Administrator, 2001).

**Foster adoption** occurs when a parent who was previously the foster parent of a child decides to legally adopt the child (Mokomane *et al.*, 2012:350).

**Same race adoptions** are adoptions where the adopted child and the adoptive parents are from the same race (Administrator, 2001).

By comparison, **Transracial adoption** involves the adoption of a child who is a different race to the adoptive parents (Administrator, 2001; Hollingsworth, 1999:444; Moos & Mwaba, 2007:1115).

**Inter country adoption** is a legal adoption facilitated by an accredited adoption organisation, where either the child or parents are not South African citizens. South Africa is party to the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoptions. Inter country adoption practice is also regulated by Chapter 18 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Children's Act 38 of 2005:87; 109; Administrator, 2001).

Although the social worker determines which type of adoption would be in the child's best interest, the form of adoption agreed upon, is determined by the child's biological and adoptive parents.

## 2.8. FORMS OF ADOPTION

Adoption can be classified into two different forms – open or closed adoption. The chosen form is agreed upon by the biological and adoptive parents and is then dependent on the type of contract that exists between the parties.

### **2.8.1 Open adoption**

Open adoption involves contact of some sort between the birth and adoptive families (Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010:276). Ferreira (2009:131) enriches this statement by adding that in South Africa, open adoption refers to contact with the biological parents and can include any member of the biological family. Where the background of the child is known, contact with the biological family can be arranged, provided that it is in the best interest of the child. Open adoptions are likely to include a post-adoption agreement as stipulated in section 234 of the Children's Act 38 (2005:213).

In open adoption the biological parent is actively involved in choosing the prospective adoptive parents. Open adoption includes the biological parents and adoptive parents meeting each other, sharing full identifying information, and having ongoing contact over the years.

Openness in adoption, or semi-open adoption, refers to various forms of communication between biological parents and adoptive parents, such as the exchange of letters and photos via an adoption agency or meeting once but not engaging in ongoing contact. In other words, the adoption agency provides full, but non-identifying information to the biological parents and the prospective adoptive parents, about each other (Ferreira, 2009:131).

Siegel (2013:44) states that today, open adoptions vary widely. Some involve minimal disclosure of identifying information exchanged through an agency or attorney. Others include full disclosure of all identifying information and on-going face-to face visits. (Grotevant & Roy, cited by Siegel, 2013:44).

Many children in South Africa are not fortunate enough to be raised by their biological parents. Many grow up on the streets and numerous children head households in a home where the parents have died of AIDS. Adoption then becomes a way of affording the orphaned child/children the permanency of becoming part of a family. In cases such as these, although the biological parents are no longer alive, the adopted child would benefit greatly by having contact with other living biological family members (Ferreira:2009:132). Open adoption as a form would be then be in child's best interest.

### **2.8.2 Closed adoption**

In a closed adoption no identifying details of the biological parents or the adoptive parents, are shared with either party (Administrator, 2001; Yourparenting.co.za, 2013). The purpose of this type of adoption is to protect the discretion of both the adoptive parents and the birth parents,

as well as protecting the adopted child from being unfairly judged by society (Ge, Natsuaki, Martine, Neiderhiser, Villareal, Reid, Leve, Shaw, Scaramella and Reiss, 2008:529).

In referring to closed adoption, Siegel (2013:43) states that from 1940 until the early 1980s adoption organisations in the United States believed that severing all ties with the child's biological parents and advocating secrecy, was crucial for the protection of the child's well-being. However, during the past thirty years, much has changed in infant adoption practices. Much of the stigma formally attached to single parenthood and children born outside a marriage, has been lost. (Collins, cited by Siegel, 2013:44). In addition, scientific research has demonstrated that knowing one's genetic heritage could have a lifesaving effect by preventing and curing diseases. (Siegel, 2013:44).

Due to a large literature detailing the harmful effects of secrecy and cut-offs in adoption, by the 1970s, some adoption agencies began to experiment with offering the birth parents the opportunity to meet their baby's prospective adoptive parents. Although some remain sceptical about the feasibility of open adoption, adoptions in which birth parents and adoptive parents exchange identifying information, have become the norm. Social workers and other helping professionals have moved towards a more "collaborative, collegial, strengths-based, empowerment approach" in their work with the adoption process. (Siegel, 2013:45).

In contrast to other countries worldwide, in South Africa many abandoned children are adopted. In these circumstances, the biological parents and/or family do not feature in the child's life, and the form of adoption is consequentially closed (Ferreira, 2009:138).

## **2.9. THE ADOPTION PROCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The adoption process is fundamental to the success and smooth transition of the placement of a child within a family. McDonald, Press, Billings and Moore (2007:11) describe the adoption process as consisting of several steps and stages. These steps and stages include altering the outcome from reunification to adoption; terminating parental rights; identifying an adoptive family; trying placement in an adoptive family and finalizing the adoption.

The adoption process begins with the birthparents making the decision that they are either unable or unwilling to parent a child and would therefore place the child up for adoption. The prospective adoptive parents are the second party to be considered in the adoption triangle. The prospective adoptive parents may decide to adopt for a variety of reasons, infertility being

one of them. Finally, the third party in the triangle is the child who has been put up for adoption. Lindsay (1987:29) gives clarity to the formation of the adoption triangle, by explaining that throughout the adoption process, three different parties need to be considered.

### **2.9.1 Reasons for wanting to adopt**

According to Malm and Welti (2010:185), what motivates families to adopt is an important question for the child welfare field. However, due to limited research on the topic, little is known about why parents choose to adopt, why they choose a certain type of adoption and whether motivation is associated with child and parent well-being.

Yourparenting.co.za (2013) draws attention to several examples of why people decide to adopt, including “philanthropic reasons; infertility; single people who have always wanted to be parents; a life-long desire to adopt or simply to increase the size of their family; prior connection to a specific child and prior exposure to adoption”. Malm and Welti (2010:185) concur, citing infertility, altruistic reasons and religiosity; prior exposure to adoption and prior connection to a child as reasons for adoption. Furthermore, the authors explain that the motivation for wanting to adopt a child can assist social workers in ascertaining whether the proposed adoption will best serve the prospective parents and be in the best interests of the child.

Infertility as a reason for adoption is worthy of exploration as the emotional and psychological effects thereof are undeniable. According to Leisewitz (cited by Pedro & Andipatin, 2014), reactions to infertility include feelings of emptiness, loneliness, depression, rejection, helplessness, powerlessness and anger. The psychological effects suffered through infertility develop into “crisis of infertility”. In point of fact, ground breaking research by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in the areas of death, grief and loss, are now well recognised in grief counselling and have extended its application to various other traumatic experiences, like infertility. (Pedro & Andipatin, 2014).

Child Welfare Information Gateway (2015) points out that couples and individuals who turn to adoption because of infertility have usually weathered an emotional rollercoaster. Their feelings should be honoured and addressed before parents can effectively support adopted children in healing from their own losses. Doubell (2014:58) states that prospective adoptive parents are required to undergo fertility counselling prior to the adoption process. The social

worker is responsible for providing appropriate counselling or referral, as well as determining the readiness of the prospective adoptive parents.

In studies of adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents, respondents often defined their intentions as altruistic and stated wanting to make a difference to a child in need by providing a family experience which would be positive for the child. Religion was also found as a motivating factor with respondents reporting that religious/spiritual beliefs about providing for a child in need played a part in their decision to adopt (Tyebjee, 2003). Another study found that a sample of American parents who adopted children from India, cited religious and/or humanitarian reasons as the primary motivating factor to provide a home to a needy child (Malm & Welti, 2010:200).

A few studies have found that exposure to adoption positively impacts willingness to adopt a child (Bausch, 2006:47). A survey conducted by The Dave Thomas foundation for Adoption in 2007, found that individuals are more likely to consider adoption if they had a family member or friend who had been adopted. Exposure to both foster care and adoption increases the likelihood that an individual will consider foster care adoption.

Berry, Barth and Needell (1996:160) noted that knowing a particular child prior to adoption or being related to the child, motivated 13% and 9% of adoptive parents to pursue adoption respectively. However, no parents adopting through private agencies did so for these two reasons. Furthermore, they found that prospective adoptive parents and birth parents adopting independently, identified with one another independently of an agency. For example, through relatives or mutual acquaintances, word of mouth or through advertisements (Vandivere, Malm & Rade, cited by Malm & Welti, 2010: 201).

### **2.9.2. Persons who may adopt a child**

Section 231 of the Children's Act 38 (2005:209) stipulates who would be eligible to become adoptive parents (Children's Act 38, 2005:209). Persons who qualify include married persons, unmarried couples living together, single persons, divorced persons, step parents, widowers, foster parents and biological fathers who are not married to the biological mothers (Children's Act 38, 2005:209). The Act does not discriminate against persons based on their relationship or financial status. Section 231(2) states that prospective adoptive parents need to be fit and proper to be entrusted with parental responsibilities; willing and able to undertake and maintain those responsibilities; be over the age of 18 years; and need to be properly assessed by an

adoption social worker to assess adoptive parent suitability (Children's Act 38, 2005:209). The Act prohibits prospective adoptive parents from being disqualified based on their financial status. Financial assistance in the form of childcare grant can be granted to the prospective parents if necessary (Children's Act 38, 2005:210). This dispels the misconception that adoption is only affordable to higher socio-economic individuals.

An objective of the Children's Act is to promote the preservation and strengthening of families (Children's Act 2005, 33). In accordance with this objective, Section 7 of the Act makes provision for foster parents and/or the biological father of the child to be considered as prospective adoptive parents. If these parties do not apply to adopt the child within 30 days of being served a notice by the sheriff stating that the child is adoptable, it is assumed that these parties are not intent on becoming the adoptive parents (Doubell, 2014:57). Section 8 of the Act makes provision for other family members to be taken into consideration as prospective adoptive parents when the child becomes available for adoption (Children's Act 2005:210).

Section 231(3) of the Children's Act states that in assessment of the prospective parents, the social worker may take cultural and community diversity of the adoptable child and prospective parents into consideration (Children's Act 38, 2005:209). The social worker is therefore obliged to evaluate whether the prospective parents would be capable of taking on the responsibility of parenting a child of a different race and whether transracial adoption would be in the best interest of the particular child (Doubell, 2014:57).

### **2.9.3 The screening and placement process**

The screening and preparation process differs from one organisation to another, but usually includes orientation meetings; interviews with social workers including interviews centring on infertility, background, marriage, extended family support, parenting, finances, culture and home environment; full medical examinations; marriage and psychological assessments; home visits; police clearance; references and a preparation course. All prospective parents are obliged to undergo the screening and preparation process (Administrator, 2001; Doubell, 2014:59).

The **screening** process can be overwhelming for many prospective parents. In this regard, Parent (2011) provides a 10-step list of what is involved in the screening process. This includes, "an orientation session where all the details are explained, complete the application forms and return them to the organisation, complete a personal profile and return it to the

organisation, apply for a police clearance certificate, undergo psychometric testing; an interview with a social worker, an interview with a panel of social workers; a home visit by a social worker, final approval, and finally waiting for baby to arrive”.

The screening process can take anything from four to six months, but this varies from case to case (Info.gov.za, 2007). Should the prospective adoptive parents be successful in their application to adopt, they will be placed on a waiting list of prospective adoption parents (Yourparenting.co.za, 2013). The prospective parents can state their preferences regarding the child they would like to adopt. These preferences include race, age, sex, disabilities, medical conditions and whether or not the child was abandoned, or given up consensually (Wolfson Vorster, 2014). The adoption organisations can then begin matching the prospective parents with a suitable child.

The official **placement** of the child with the adoptive parents is a legal process, carried out through the Children’s Court. Once the child has been with the new parents for a period of time and the social worker has assessed the adoption to be in the best interests of the child, the adoption is finalised through the Children’s Court. The child then becomes the legal child of the adoptive parents as if the child was born to them and has all the same rights as a biological child (The adoption process, n.d).

After having signed consent to the adoption, the biological parents have 60 days within which to change their minds and withdraw the consent. Thereafter, the consent is final (Children’s Act 38, 2005:213). At this stage, the child may already be in the care of the adoptive parents or in alternative temporary care (Administrator, 2001). It is necessary for withdrawal of consent to be done in writing and the parent or guardian will have to complete a Form 64 (Doubell, 2014:54). Counselling for both parties is imperative, as it ensures that the birthparents make a decision they feel most comfortable with, as well as guiding the adoptive parents through the grief process should the birthparent change their mind (Doubell, 2014:55).

#### **2.9.4 The Adoption Triad**

As previously noted, the three parties who form the adoption triangle are the birth parents, the adoptive parents and the adopted child. Siegel (2015) notes that the process of adoption is challenging for all parties involved. The pain and losses entrenched in fertility, being separated from a child through adoption (even when it’s an informed decision made without coercion) or losing one’s birth family thorough adoption are significant, often traumatic experiences.



Feelings of grief, loss of control, shame, guilt, rejection, bewilderment, anger, issues with intimacy and identity issues may evolve throughout the lifetime of adoption triad members. These feelings may re-emerge at times, and for many, never completely disappear.

#### 2.9.4.1 The biological parents

Parents who are considering giving up their child for adoption require considerable support and guidance, as the solemn decision which faces them, has to be carefully considered. Siegel (2015) affirms this by stressing that over the past several decades, there has been a greater understanding that birth parents need competent pre-adoption counselling and easy access to affordable, quality family support and preservation services before parental rights are terminated.

When being confronted with an unwanted pregnancy, the birth mother might decide to contact an adoption social worker. (Administrator, 2001). In South Africa, to legally adopt a child, one has to work through an accredited adoption organisation or with the assistance of an adoption social worker (Administrator, 2001, Info.gov.za, 2007; Yourparenting.co.za, 2013). Social workers and other health professionals play an important role in supporting the biological parents during this time. Counselling offers the birth mother options available to her, assisting her in making an informed decision regarding her unborn child. These include keeping the child, abortion, foster care or adoption (Administrator, 2001). Lindsay (1987:50, 96) highlights the importance of the birth mother receiving counselling long before and after the adoption has taken place, as the experience is most painful for her. Baden, Gibbons, Wilson and McGinnis (2013) concur, adding that birth parents are likely to need clear information, support and nonbiased counselling before the decision to make an adoption plan, after relinquishment occurs, and before and during reunions with their children (in the cases of open adoption).

According to Baxter, Norwoor, Ashbury, Jannusch and Sharp (2012), historically birth mothers were treated adversely. Deykin, Campbell & Patti (cited by Baxter *et al.*:2012) state that feelings of powerlessness, pressure to place the child for adoption and lack of information about the adoptive families and the child, were common to birth mothers' experiences. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute (cited by Foli, 2012) asserts that the profile of birthmothers has changed from unwed teenage birth mothers who relinquish their babies, to birth mothers who are in their 20s and are parenting at least one other child. Nevertheless, Wegar (2000:364) is of the opinion that the birth mother is still a stigmatized member of the adoption triad as she is



often assumed to be immoral, selfish and to feel no or inadequate love for her baby. This level of stigma may account for the struggle in their decisions to relinquish their children.

#### 2.9.4.2 The adoptive parents

Of all the members of the adoption triad, the position of the adoptive parents is typically viewed as having the most power and the greatest number of choices (Baden *et al.*, 2013). However, despite this advantage, adopting a child can be a stressful and vulnerable time for parents, even though their experience of adoption is perceived as that of gain as opposed to loss.

Waterman (2011:279) notes that adoptive parents might face feelings of loss in the adoption process, which could be less obvious than that felt by adoptees and birth parents. For example, adoptive parents may have feelings of grief due to the loss of biological children and prior lost pregnancies. In light of societal views, Baxter *et al.* (2012) add that adoptive parents are obliged to construct stories about the adoption process, as it is a non-normative path to creating a family. Furthermore, they must account for why they chose adoption to birth mothers, to outsiders and to the adopted child. (Wahl, Mc Bride & Schrod, 2009:288) They must present themselves as worthy parents to an agency and/or to potential birth mothers and construct an adoption narrative for their child (Krusiewicz & Wood, 2001:786).

Krusiewicz and Wood (2001:795) remark that adoptive parents are often viewed as “rescuers, do-gooders, selfless, and altruistic” by society, despite being stigmatized due to assumptions of infertility and their adoptions of “second-best” children. However, a more accurate look at the experiences of adoptive parents is far more complex. Issues of infertility, shame and inferiority highlight the need for counselling, given their impact on the psychological functioning, parenting skills and interpersonal skills (Baden *et al.*, 2013).

Adoptive parents often make the transition to parenthood at older ages after facing challenges such as infertility. The speed of the transition into parenthood for these families is often escalated due to the older ages of children available for adoption. Furthermore, developmental periods during which parents and children bond are often missed, resulting in adoptive parents being forced to cope with developmental delays and/or medical issues, at a time when attachment and bonding are crucial and should take priority (McKay & Ross, cited by Baden *et al.*, 2013).

Baxter (*et al.*, 2012) encapsulate the above by stating that adoptive parents face unique challenges in the process of moving toward adoption and negotiating family identity post-adoption.

#### 2.9.4.3 The child

In many respects, children who are adopted are a vulnerable population. (Foli, 2012). Baden *et al.* (2013) are of the same opinion and state that adoptees have the least power and the lowest degree of self-determination of the adoption triad members. Baxter *et al.* (2012) state that although biological offspring have no control over the families into which they are born, the fact that they born into families creates a normative experience which is likely not to be questioned. Informed adoptees are made aware of the fact that someone made a decision not to parent them and that others made a decision to take them in.

Although research has shown that adoptees often experience uncertainty and loss about their adoption (Colaner & Kranstuber, Grovenant & McRoy, Powell & Afifi, cited by Baxter *et al.*, 2012), research has also shown adoptees to have equally high or higher self-esteem than their non-adoptive peers. (Benson, Sharma & Roehlkepartain, cited by Baxter *et al.*, 2012). Grotevant, Dunbar, Kohler & Essau (2000:384) explain that adopted individuals need to make sense of their identities in relation to their biological and adopted family members as well as internally.

### 2.9.5 Experiences of Adoptive Parents in the Adoption Process

The fundamental aim of adoption is to provide stable and loving families for children whose parents cannot, or are not willing to care for them. However, information on the experiences of adoptive parents in this process, is sorely lacking. Information discussed is primarily based on one source, due to lack of literature describing the reflections of adoptive parents' experience of the adoption process.

Research carried out by Dance and Farmer (2014:111) in the United Kingdom, discovered that the majority of parents found that there was no particular trigger that prompted them making enquiries about adoption - the time just happened to be right for them. Group preparation was generally well received by the participants, with most reporting that they'd learned a lot. Meeting others who were going through a similar experience, was appreciated, although friendships did not always persist due to concerns about the rates of progress towards

placement. Participants reported the group preparation as being both physically and emotionally draining, with some describing feeling shocked at some of the information and materials they were exposed to, albeit appreciating it as a valuable learning experience. Input from people who had adopted was highly valued and reassurance that feeling overwhelmed and confused was normal under the circumstances, restored confidence. The prospective adopters indicated that the skills and experience of the assessing social worker played an important role in determining whether the experience was positive or not. (Dance & Farmer, 2014:111).

Progress from application to approval was reported as being very slow, with the average time being 18, rather than the recommended 6 months. The South African government states that the average duration of an adoption is 6 to 12 months. However, Wolfson-Vorster (2015) disputes this, by stating that the government appears to be benchmarking against an invalid timeframe. In the author's personal adoption experience, although all case files were accurate, there were no queries from the court, the registrar or Home Affairs, the adoption of her daughter took almost four years from start to finish. As a children's rights activist with a special interest in adoption, Wolfson-Vorster states that, "I have yet to meet anyone whose adoption was completed in less than a year". A noteworthy distinction between adoption in the United Kingdom and South Africa, is that there is a need for processes in the United Kingdom to be made more flexible and responsive while recognising that some adoptive parents might need more time in their decision making. In South Africa, the process is extensive and prospective parents become impatient with the length of time the process takes.

Relatively few articles have focused on how adopters experience the pre-approval stage of the process or the ways in which their opinions change throughout the course of the process. Rushton & Monck (2009:9) conducted research on the levels of satisfaction with different elements of the preparation process, but this study focused on adopters who were experiencing difficulties. Assistance with challenging behaviour and attachment problems was therefore a priority for the participants. By contrast, Ward's (2011:10) article examined the views of people responding to National Adoption Week with regard to prospective adoptive parents' expectations and preferences about the sort of child they felt they could parent as they progressed through the adoption process. While the majority of adopters were initially interested in adopting young children, most were prepared to consider older children or the need to be placed with siblings. Conversely, many had reservations about parenting children with disabilities. The study recounted how some participating adopters had initially sought to

parent a sibling group, but their decision had altered in the course of their home study, the result being that they were approved for one or two children only. The reason for adjustment in their decision, is thought to be due to the adoption workers' efforts to encourage adopters to be realistic about their abilities and resources. This factor seems to contribute to a conflict in placing siblings together and pressure on agencies to place children promptly. Decision-making about sibling separation can be a factor in delay in individual cases (Farmer, Dance, Beecham, Bronon and Ouwejan, 2010).

Change in adopter's views about the types of children they felt able to parent were observed in 60% of cases. Increased understanding of the needs of the children waiting for adoption and discussions with practitioners were found to be the reasons for the change. Participants emphasised the difficulty they had thinking about these issues in the abstract. Cousins (2003) debated that the hypothetical approach to asking about the type of child people would want to adopt could create barriers in finding appropriate families for children, as it is upon meeting a real child that the adopters are able to identify how they feel about becoming a child's parent. This may cause them to move beyond their original preferences.

In conclusion, although the focus of adoption is rightly on the best interests of the child, little is said about how prospective adopters are supported and their interests promoted once they have been approved as prospective parents (Dance & Farmer, 2014:113).

## **2.10. THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER**

In the adoption process, the role of the social worker is imperative. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the Director -General may accredit only social workers in private practice and child protection organisations, to provide adoption services (Children's Act 38, 2005:226).

### **2.10.1 Persons allowed to provide adoption services**

Section 1(47) of the White Paper for Social Welfare indicates that adoption is a specialised service requiring the expertise of accredited adoption social workers functioning within a statutory adoption system (Children's Act 38, 2005:226; White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997:65). Correspondingly, Section 250(1) of the Children's Act states that no person may provide adoption services, except a child protection organisation accredited in terms of section 251 to provide adoption services; an adoption social worker; the Central Authority in the case

of the inter-country adoptions; or a child protection organisation accredited in terms of section 259 to provide inter-country adoption services. Professional services rendered in connection with the adoption of a child by a psychologist or lawyer, or member of any other profession is not prohibited in the Children's Act (38) of 2005.

Wolfson-Vorster (2016) states that currently, adoption practice is on the verge of an important change. With the Children's Second Amendment Bill nearing finalisation, Department of Social Development social workers will soon be able to perform adoptions. This, together with a strategically timed revision to the rates that private and agency-based adoption social workers are permitted to charge, could end in adoptions becoming the monopoly of government social workers.

The screening process in South Africa is deliberately challenging, in an attempt to eliminate trafficking and abuse. Administrator (2001) points out that it is the social worker who is ultimately completely responsible for making a decision regarding the child's future. Although the screening process is often described as arduous and complicated, the most difficult part of adoption is not the screening process prior to placement, but the legal steps to finalise the adoption. This takes place after the child is placed in the care of the adoptive parents. If the court or government halted the adoption at this point, the child could already have suffered emotional harm (Wolfson-Vorster, 2016). This fact emphasises the importance of social workers ensuring that the child is placed in the care of the most appropriate parents (Doubell, 2014:60).

### **2.10.2 The role of the social worker in counselling the adoption triad**

The social worker plays a major role in the counselling of both biological and adoptive parents. In certain cases, should the adopted child want to trace their biological parents once they reach the age of 18 years old, the social worker will play a role in the adoptive child's life as well.

#### **2.10.2.1 Counselling the biological parents**

The social worker needs to ensure that the birth mother fully understands the outcomes of adoption and that she is comfortable with the decision she makes (Administrator, 2001). The birth mother should receive counselling prior to and after adoption takes place. According to Lindsey (1987:50, 96), it is typically the birth mother for whom the process is most difficult. The majority of adoption organisations therefore provide on-going support to birth parents.

In addition, the social worker should assist the biological parents in setting up a post adoption agreement in terms of Section 234 of the Children's Act (Administrator, 2001; Doubell, 2014).

#### 2.10.2.2 Counselling the prospective adoptive parents

The social worker plays a pivotal role in screening the adoptive parents and preparing them for the adoption (Administrator, 2001). This process can be time-consuming. It can take several months and typically involves several counselling sessions including marriage and psychological assessments and fertility counselling (Administrator, 2001).

Baxter *et al.* (2012), are of the opinion that adoptive parents know for certain that they want a child and their experience of adoption will therefore be one of gain as opposed to loss. The position of adoptive parents may therefore seem to be the least thorny position of the adoption triad. However, adoptive parents face unique challenges in the process of moving toward adoption and negotiating family identity post-adoption. Miall (cited by Baxter *et al.*, 2012) observes that some adoption agencies confuse adoptive parents by telling them that they are real parents, yet asking when they will tell the children they are not the real parents. Farber, Timberlake, Mudd and Cullen (2003:175, 176) note that situations such as having to tell people about their decision to adopt; having to tell their child they are adopted; managing potential relationships with the biological family; understanding financial obligations as well parental rights and responsibilities of becoming parents and having to make a final obligation to adopt, can be stressful and cause the adoptive parents to feel vulnerable. Assistance in the way of orientation programs that can assist prospective adoptive parents in making informed decisions regarding adoption, should be offered by adoption social workers.

#### 2.10.2.3 Counselling the adopted child

The adopted child may return to the social worker who facilitated their adoption, for counselling purposes. This is particularly necessary when the child wants to trace his or her biological parents. The social worker should offer counselling prior to the search commencing, as well as after the adoptee has traced their parents. The process is particularly emotional for the adoptee. Identity issues related to being adopted, could also be a challenge for the adopted child (Doubell, 2013:62).

### **2.10.3 Role of broker in legal proceedings**

The social worker has a role to fulfil in the legal proceedings that need to take place in the adoption process. Working together with the courts, the social worker assists in identifying the biological parents and obtaining consent for the adoption from them (Administrator, 2001). In instances where the birth mother is a minor, the social worker will assist her in communications with her guardians, as they are legally responsible to provide the necessary consent (Administrator, 2001).

By acting as a liaison between all parties in the adoption triangle and the courts, the social worker assists in alleviating much of the pressure for both the adoptive parents and the biological parents.

### **2.10.4 Role of Administrator – Register for Adoptable Children and Prospective Adoptive Parents**

RACAP is the Register for Adoptable Children and Prospective Adoptive Parents. The register is kept as a record of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents who have been deemed fit (Children's Act 38, 2005:76; Ferreira, 2009:271). The register enables prospective adoptive parents to be matched with adoptable children. Social workers are responsible for maintaining this register.

## **2.11 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 2 has reviewed relevant literature and research applicable to the aspects of adoption under study. It is important to bear in mind that adoption is a dynamic process and many different forms of adoption are practiced worldwide. Political and legislative reform, together with the Children's Act 38 of 2005, have made it possible for transracial adoption to become a reality in South Africa. Comprehensive guidelines set out in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, ensure that the interests of all parties involved in the adoption process, are met. Furthermore, social workers and other professionals working in the field of adoption have been given more comprehensive guidelines in order to ensure that the best interests of the child are met.

In the next chapter transracial adoption will be explored from an ecological perspective.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

This following chapter gives an overview of general systems theory by exploring the concept that individuals are continually in the process of exchange with the environment. Homeostasis needs to be maintained constantly. The chapter describes the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents within an ecological perspective, as well as the main works that contributed to the perspective, namely Lewin and Bronfenbrenner. Specific attention will be given to the different levels of society described by Bronfenbrenner.

Adopting a child from an ethnically different race is likely to highlight unique challenges, which can result in the transracial adoptive parents experiencing complex family circumstances. The ecological system as a theory, is exceptionally well-suited to studying transracial adoption, as it explores the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents in the social environment of their families. This environment includes broader networks such as schools, as well as communities, which may contribute to challenges experienced in the adoption process.

According to Schweiger & O'Brien (cited by Verbovaya, 2016:198) an ecological systems perspective is rarely used in studies of adoptive families. Schweiger & O'Brien are among a few researchers who propose looking at adoptive families through the prism of ecological systems theory. They have also applied the ecological systems approach to the analysis of research on special needs adoption. From the ecological systems theory view, a family, as an immediate proximal environment, represents a microsystem for children and adoptive parents; the links between biological families and adoptive families can be viewed as a mesosystem; adoption agencies and services can be considered an exosystem; and cultures and traditions represent a macrosystem (De Oliveira, Barros, da Silva Anselmi & Piccinini, 2006:635).

Sheafor, Horejsi and Horejsi (2000:92) state that problems experienced in social functioning are the result of people-environment exchanges and not only the result of personality characteristics or environmental factors. People both shape their environment and are shaped by it. Adopted children face a wide range of challenges as they transition from their biological



families, into orphanages, the foster care system and then to an adoptive family. According to Pooley, Pike, Drew and Breen (2002), children are part of a greater community. Interaction with the community becomes more intricate and expands to include peers, groups, schools and other systems. These systems affect a child as well as adoptive parents and the family as a whole. Because transracial adoption is visible, the fact that the child is not the same race as the parents, impacts on every level of the ecological perspective.

The ecological perspective would prove useful when working with transracial adoptive parents as it provides insight into the different aspects which impact on the individual's emotions and behaviour. Furthermore, it addresses the second objective of this study, which is to describe transracial adoption within an ecological perspective in order to develop an understanding of the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents. A supportive environment with available resources which are efficient, will promote the well-being of the individual. Dissimilarly, the opposite could lead to disillusionment and a sense of failure. The ecological perspective provides awareness of the need for social networks and how they can be used to ensure that the adoption process is a positive experience.

### **3.2 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION**

Bronfenbrenner used Lewin's concepts to render a model of development within the context of multiple systems (Higham, 2006:159). It is therefore essential to discuss Lewin's Field Theory in brief, before focusing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective. Lewin believed that a theory could be developed that would apply to the study of the community, organisation, group, family, and the individual (Dale *et al.*, 2006:192). In his investigation of human behaviour, Lewin developed field theory, which was one of the earliest psychological influences to believe that in order to study human behaviour, the individual had to be viewed in an environmental context.

Field theory explores the forces and factors that influence any given situation. Lewin's "field" refers to the psychological environment of the individual or the collective group at a particular point of time. Field theory focuses on the importance of the interaction between the person and the environment. Many influences shape behaviour and should be taken into consideration when working with people (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:16; Lewin, 1952:25).

Lewin (1952:25-31) maintained that field theory in physics states that as particles travel through space, they are affected by many vectors, forces and their interactions. Lewin likened this to humans traveling through a life space and the experiences they encounter. Their behaviour is influenced by many vectors, similar to a particle passing through space. Scileppi, Teed and Torres (2000:28) add that humans are influenced by conscious experiences and perceptions. Therefore, one must consider the internal and external factors that influence each individual, in order to understand human behaviour.

Field theory emphasizes that to change behaviour, abilities of the individual and the characteristics of the environment need to change. A synergy results in all the factors in a system lining up with one another. When such a situation is created, the effects of all the factors working together is greater than the sum of each force working separately. This is the fundamental concept of systems theory, which states that the whole system is greater than the sum of its parts. Scileppi *et al.*, (2000:28) state that field theory aims to ensure that all the courses in the individual's life are moving towards the same goal, as this creates synergy and a good person-environment fit.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory agrees with ideologies of Lewin's work, by stating that to be able to understand human development, one needs to consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. Bronfenbrenner developed a concept which views the developing person within the environment, with the emphasis on the evolving interaction between the two (Scileppi *et al.*, 2000:45).

Ecological systems theory views human development as a function of interaction of systems and helps to understand how the process within an individual or family is affected by conditions outside the microsystem of a person or family. The structures of the systems are interconnected, and psychological growth of a person is impacted by this interconnectedness (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:9). The bio-ecological perspective proposed by Bronfenbrenner is a complex, multi-levelled perspective emphasizing the individual, interactions, contexts and time. Layers or levels of interacting systems resulting in change, growth and development, such as physical, biological, psychological, social and cultural, interact with one another. Change in one system affects and is affected by other systems. Swart and Pettipher (cited by Mahembe, 2012:19) concur with this by stating that relationships are reciprocal and multifaceted. Multidimensional perspectives are valuable in describing developmental as well as complex causal processes involved in various types of change. Multidimensional perspectives are described by Frank (1959) as conceptual models needed by psychology, which

will distribute multidimensional processes operating in the human organism-personality, living in and continuously maintaining a symbolic cultural world. These models are not theories or explanations but rather tools for understanding processes that are multidimensional, the way a template is used to scan situations for discovering what has been omitted.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:9) describes development as occurring through processes of regular, active, two-way interaction between individuals and the immediate, everyday environment. To understand the processes that are affected by remote contexts, multiple contexts in which they occur must be investigated. Bronfenbrenner's ecological environment is composed of four interrelated systems, namely microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and macrosystems. From the ecological systems theory view, a family, as an immediate proximal environment, represents a microsystem for children and adoptive parents; the links between biological families and adoptive families can be viewed as a mesosystem; adoption agencies and services can be considered an exosystem; and cultural norms, traditions, attitudes towards social roles and communication systems represent a macrosystem. Finally, the later developed chronosystem reflects the development of a person over that time (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005). The principle of interconnectedness applies to the systems, as well as to the linkages between the systems. The developing person both participates in these systems and is affected by events occurring in his or her immediate environment. Both Bronfenbrenner and Lewin believed that the ecological environment is conceived as a set of structures, each inside the other, like a set of Russian dolls (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Lewin, 1917, 1931, 1935, cited by Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39). These levels, as with the structures within a Russian doll, will be discussed, moving from the innermost level to the outermost.

With regards to transracial adoption, Ung, Harris, O'Connor & Pillidge (2012) state that individuals are influenced by organic factors like age at adoption and number of placements. Family factors include the racial and ethnic values that families internalize as well as how accepting families are to being shaped by the ethnicity, race and culture of their adopted child. Community factors consist of the communications received by the neighbourhood regarding adoption and race, and societal factors include elements like adoption policy, media, race and power.

The different levels of the ecological perspective will be discussed.

### 3.2.1 Microsystem

The microsystem constitutes a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting. Relationships within the microsystem include interactions with family, friends, teachers, peers and extra-mural affiliates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:7; Wait, Meyer & Loxton, 2005:156). It is the smallest and most direct system that a person experiences. It is within the immediate environment of the microsystem that proximal processes, or interactions between persons and their environment on a regular basis, operate to produce and sustain development. Proximal processes are the primary mechanism through which human potential is actualised. To be successful in stimulating effective, continuous development, proximal processes need to be reciprocal, progressively complex, and occur regularly over an extended time-period, so as to become more complex (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39).

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) state that the microsystem involves roles, relationships and patterns of daily activities that shape many aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development of family members. It is characterised by individuals and events closest to one's life. This family system should support feelings of belonging, love and support and serve as an environment which offers safety and protection to all members.

Algood, Hong, Gouridine and Williams (2011: 1145) explain that when an adoptive child enters a family, the family's routine alters. This can cause instability and confusion between family members and adoptive parents may experience stress or even depression caused by the inability to meet the needs of the child. Parental stress may affect the sensitivity, responsiveness and warmth necessary to create a favourable environment for an adopted child. Parents often feel helpless in their ability to provide appropriate support and guidance for their children.

As first-time parents approach adoption, many experience stress and feelings of incompetence due to their self-professed lack of parenting skills. New parents of any child may feel concerned about their lack of experience in how to handle novel situations such as creating and enforcing of appropriate rules, discipline and developing a relationship with the child. Adoptive parents must prove themselves competent to the adoption agency, which adds additional stress because parents could feel their parenting skills are under scrutiny. They could concern themselves with being disqualified from adopting should any inadequacies come to the fore (Watson *et al*, 2012:434).

In a study carried out by Park (2012:491), it was found that all adoptive parents in the study described themselves as committed, competent, and confident parents. However, they experienced difficulties in applying their own parental knowledge and strategies. Parents often felt confused and unsure of their approach, resulting in a feeling of failure or helplessness. Even for parents who had biological children, parenting became a challenging task which required new skills.

Schweiger & O'Brien (cited by Verbovaya, 2016:199) note that existing literature on adoption focuses on a mother and a child, omitting other aspects of the family microsystem: such as parental views and expectations of an adoptive placement, strengths and weaknesses of parents, quality of the relationship between a mother and a father, and the adopted child's relationships with siblings.

Although many adoptions proceed smoothly, with both parent/parents and child reporting a positive experience, literature demonstrates how child and parental circumstances can influence the adoption process and affect the family dynamic. Most of this literature focuses on issues that develop after the adoption occurs and the child represents with symptoms of maladjustment, such as behavioural problems. While treatment is usually available after a problem has developed, adoption agencies could offer individual and family counselling as after care services, to address these unique experiences and stressors that adoptive parents face with the adoption process (Watson *et al.*, 2012:438, 439).

Although the microsystem is the smallest of the systems, it is the most direct and encourages the focus on the goodness of fit between family paradigms, parental expectations and child characteristics. The focus on the network of family relationships and the transactional nature of influence within families gives a greater understanding of the processes of adaptation when transracial children are adopted. One area of interest regarding adaptation, is attachment.

#### 3.2.1.1 Attachment

Attachment is the emotional bond of infant to parent or caregiver. It is described as a pattern of emotional and behavioural interaction that develops over time, especially in contexts where infants express a need for attention, comfort, support or security. Typically, a family provides a nurturing environment to children. However, it can also be a source of distress if a child is suffering from abuse or neglect. The quality of parental care is an important factor for building a nurturing environment and developing a strong bond between parent and child (van

IJzendoorn, 2012:5). A strong attachment bond is crucial for the well-being of the family microsystem. Adoptive parents and children affect and are influenced by each other (Hong, Algood, Chiu & Lee, 2011:869).

Attachment is the result of a relationship that builds between two partners, an infant and a caregiver (Papalia, *et al.* 2008:225). Bowlby (1982) states that attachment occurs when certain behavioural systems are activated. The primary attachment figure is usually, but not necessarily, the child's mother. (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 2015:xix). Although most infants do form attachment relationships with other people such as grandparents or child care providers, mothers are usually the principle caregivers for infants. Attachment behaviour is nearly always shown earlier, more strongly and more consistently towards mothers. If mothers are consistently and lovingly sensitive to the infant's needs, the infant feels secure, safe, stable and perceives the world as safe and reliable. Although attachment behaviours differ across cultures, both mothers and infants contribute to security of attachment by the way in which they respond to one another (Ferreira, 2009:78, 79).

From an ecological perspective, attachment is conceptualized as bidirectional and involves characteristics of both parents and children. Research on adopted children's attachment to their adoptive parents has been examined using observation as a method of research and is typically limited to children adopted in infancy. The Strange Situation laboratory-based technique, which was devised by Ainsworth (1967), was designed to assess attachment patterns between an infant and an adult. When Ainsworth and her colleagues assessed infant behaviour and the attachment patterns they form, they found three main patterns of attachment. These are secure attachment, anxious attachment and ambivalent (resistant) attachment. Later research identified a fourth type of attachment - disorganised-disorientated attachment. Secure attachment effects functioning in the community and is deemed to be central to mental health. The child is able to explore, experiment and deal confidently with the world (Papalia *et al.*, 2008:225). Golombok (1994:111) states that studies have shown that the most important determinant of a secure attachment relationship for a child is the sustained presence of a responsive attachment figure.

Children who do not form attachments to a caregiver show evidence of behavioural as well as emotional difficulties. Bowlby (1982), believes that when an individual is secure in the knowledge that an attachment figure will be available to him/her when he/she needs them, that individual will be less prone to intense or chronic fear than an individual who does not

experience this feeling of security. According to Papalia *et al.* (2008:226), children develop favourably when there is continuity in care-giving.

Attachment is widely considered to be a fundamental issue in adoptive families and may be of specific concern when children have been removed from their biological families. Infant attachment to parents can be compromised when families are separated or when infants are raised in institutional settings such as children's homes. Similarly, in the case of adoption, disruption in the relationship between care-giver and infant often happens due to multiple placements in the child's early years. This could cause the child's emotional attachment to become insubstantial and indiscriminate, which could ultimately result in the child lacking warmth in his/her relationships with others (Rushton, Mayes, Dance & Quinton, 2003:394).

According to Suwalsky, Padilla, Yuen, Horn, Bradley, Putnick and Bernstein (2015:200), when placed within the first few months of life, adopted infants were able to form attachments to their mothers that were as secure as those formed by non-adoptive infants. Comparatively, with research in adoptive families of older children, the construct of attachment is more typically measured by adoptive parent reports. Timm, Mooradian & Hock (2011:276) state that one characteristic of adoptive parents that has been identified as contributing to positive parent-child relationships, is a sense of legitimacy or "entitlement". Belief on the part of the adoptive parent that he or she does not have the right to raise and make decisions for the adopted child, is associated with difficulties in attachment in adoptive families.

Another aspect which could affect attachment of infants in South African law, is that the biological parents have 60 days to alter their decision about an adoption. To prevent disruption in the development of attachment between adoptive parents and the infant, infants are placed in interim care while awaiting the completion of the 60 day period. In the case of abandoned children, or when the father is unknown, agencies are obligated to place newspaper ads seeking the infant's extended family and then observe a mandatory three-month waiting period for a response, before allowing them to be adopted by a nonrelative. For families adopting within their own race, they are frequently matched immediately to a child after they complete screening, but transracial adoptive parents must undergo a final hurdle. They are placed on the Register of Adoptable Children and Adopting Parents, a waiting list for babies and families for whom a same race placement is not immediately available (Brown, 2014).

Studies show that the younger a child is when attachment is formed, the better it is emotionally for their later development. Although children in care are often not fortunate enough to form



immediate relationships with their biological parents, it is possible for them to bond with a parent-figure. This practice will assist in developing the skills needed to develop healthy relationships as the child becomes older. Although the ideal situation would be for a child to attach to their parent/s, whether biological or adoptive from birth, when this is not possible, an attachment to a caregiver needs to be established. As children do not need to be raised by their biological families to form attachments, adoption is a means of giving a child an opportunity of forming a secure attachment to an adult. This will contribute towards the child becoming an emotionally secure and well-adjusted adult.

#### 3.2.1.2 Sibling relationships

Sibling relationships in adoptive families remain largely unexplored in the research literature. Even less explored, is literature on siblings that cross racial and cultural boundaries, as is the case in many families formed through transracial adoption. Baden (2011) states that issues of adoption, along with racial and cultural differences, add layers of complexity to sibling relationship dynamics. Adoptive children could enter families that include biological children of one or both parents, or previously adopted children. However, its importance has been recognised clinically, and social workers involved in adoption are urged to prepare siblings for placement of the adoptive child by including them in the family assessment, education, and support process (Baden, 2011).

#### 3.2.1.3 Marital relationships

Belsky, Lang & Rovin; Glenn; Rollins & Feldman (cited by Watson *et al*, 2012:434) noted that adoptive families experience the same decrease in marital satisfaction as other families who have children. Golderberg *et al*. (2010:865) found that all couples experience a reduction in relational satisfaction after adoption. Reasons may include diversion of attention from the partner toward the child, inability to cope with the transition or negative experiences with the adoption process. Both family and child could continue to be affected by these dynamics, should they not be able to utilize internal and external resources.

Overall, the microsystem's setting relates to the direct environment individuals have in their lives. It focuses on the people who have direct contact with each individual in their microsystem. It is the setting in which direct social interactions take place with these social



agents. Individuals are not mere recipients of their experiences when socializing with others in the microsystem environment, but are contributing to the construction of such environment..

### **3.2.2 The Mesosystem**

The mesosystem is a system of microsystems and comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. An example of this would be the relations between home and school, school and the workplace. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:40). Bronfenbrenner (1986:723) further states that although the family is the principle context in which human development takes place, it is one of several settings in which the developmental process can and does occur. Examples of these, would be school and the parent's workplace. Furthermore, the processes operating in different settings are not independent of each other. To cite an example, events at home, such as witnessing domestic abuse, can affect a child's progress in school, and vice versa.

Mesosystem links can be important in understanding microsystem relationships, because children's experiences in other contexts, away from the family microsystems, alter their perceptions and behaviour, thereby influencing the way they act with parents and siblings. Since other family members do not participate in these contexts with the child, their influence on the family system may not be recognised. To understand why children demonstrate certain behaviours with their parents and siblings, it is therefore vital to examine the mesosystem when attempting to understand family relationships.

In the context of adoptive families, mesosystems can have a positive effect on the child and offer an extended social circle within the environment, thereby contributing to a child's development while providing social support to a family (Swick & Williams, 2006:373). De Olivera, Barros, da Silva, Anselmi & Piccinini (2006:635) identify biological families as mesosystems, with which adoptive families interact.

An issue new transracial adoptive parents may face, is the amount of support they receive, both internal and external. Internal support consists of resources that come from the nuclear family such as spousal support, while external support may come from extended family, such as grandparents, friends, neighbours and other sources from the community. These external sources become great resources for all families who adopt (Watson *et al.*, 2012:434). When the adoptive parents feel supported, assisted and encouraged, they are more capable of managing

their challenges. This positivity filters down to the adoptive children, thereby contributing to their development.

### 3.2.2.1 Biological family context

With regard to the biological family context, every adopted child has two sets of parents, adoptive parents and birth parents. Adoptive parents become the child's family and have sole rights and responsibilities towards their adopted child. However, in the case of open adoption, birth parents continue to impact the child's experiences as an adoptee. In addition, adoptive parents are affected by the biological family's impact on them as parents.

Many adoptive parents choose to search for biological relatives of their children. Both adoptees and adoptive parents cite finding out more about the family's medical history and filling an emotional void as reasons for searching for the biological family (Families for Russian and Ukrain Adoptees, 2014). These situations are complex and present a good example of how a mesosystem of a biological family affects the microsystem of an adoptive family. Some children may desire to search for their biological families, which often leads to adoptive parents feeling a range of emotions, from feeling the loss of a child, to feeling betrayed, to wanting to help the child in their search (Families for Russian & Ukrainian Adoptees, 2014). Some adoptive parents are concerned that meeting the biological family will have a detrimental effect on the emotional well-being of their child because of mental health or psychological conditions of the child (Verbovaya, 2016:200).

Children who are adopted at an older age retain memories of their experiences within their family of origin, whether they continue to have contact with their biological family or not. According to ecological theory, these memories create a unique developmental context for adopted children and is linked to children's experiences in the microsystem of the adoptive family. Many of the children's experiences are and continue to be stressful and emotionally challenging. Mesosystems may have a negative impact on parents or children as in the case of older adoptees remaining in contact with their biological parents. For example, a child's sense of abandonment by his or her biological parents may be expressed as anger that is turned towards an adoptive parent (Derdeyn & Graves, cited by Adamec & Laurie, 2007:121).

Although attachment theory suggests that maintaining contact between adopted children and their biological families would contribute to a more realistic viewpoint on the part of the children, child welfare professionals generally oppose continued contact between adopted

children and their biological parents. They cite immediate disruptions in children's behaviour and emotional state as the reason for their disapproval. Openness in adoption is reported to be more beneficial than closed adoption for the psychological well-being of children (Blanton & Drescher, cited by Goldstein, 2013:17).

Verbovaya (2016:195) states that among adoptive parents, the issue of whether to maintain contact with their child's biological parents is a very personal choice, as well as being controversial. In the context of ecological systems theory, experiences are interconnected and adopted children bring their background into an adoptive family. Therefore, whether adoptive parents support or oppose maintaining contact with their child's biological family, experiences of all family members (both biological and adoptive) affect their relationship with one another.

Literature regarding the biological family context does not highlight the difference between same-race adoptions and transracial adoptions. However, in a South African study on transracial adoptions, Romanini (2017:87) found that adoptive parents wanted their child to know where she came from, and to be proud of her heritage. Furthermore, participants wanted their child to know that their birth mother had acted in their best interests by placing them for adoption. These findings are in accordance with Attwell (2004) who found that participants were in agreement about sharing information about the birthparents with their adopted children. In addition, Atwell emphasised the value of adoptive parents sharing positive information about the birth parents with their adopted child, to prevent the child from resenting their birth parents.

#### 3.2.2.2 Peer relationships

Ecological theory predicts that in all families, both adoptive and biological, the quality of the parent-child relationship affects children's school adjustment and peer relationships. Children adopted at older ages are at risk for disruptions in their school attendance and peer relationships. Poor school achievement is often associated with adoption in situations where there have been multiple foster placements (Brodzinsky & Pinderhughes, 2002:285). Adopted children's inclusion in supportive peer groups that value achievement contributes to positive family relationships. However, special needs adopted children have few skills necessary to enter into a relationship with an established peer group. This results in these children being socially isolated, or even worse, connecting with deviant peers. School counsellors and teachers could help to ease the transition into a new school environment for a newly adopted child and provide opportunities for the child to meet and spend time with supportive peers. Practitioners working

with children in schools have recognised the need for more support for all adopted children, and especially for those with special needs (Gore, 2015).

### **3.2.3 The Exosystem**

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994:40) the exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person. However, the events which occur, indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives. Working hours of the parents or community-based family resources such as adoption support groups, are examples.

Synonymous with other systems, the exosystem may affect adoptive families positively and negatively. Although the adoptee may not be directly involved at this level, he or she feels the positive or negative force involved with the interaction of his or her own system (Paquette & Ryan, 2009).

Schweiger and O'Brien (2005:516) maintain that adoption is a choice made by adults to parent children who are biologically unrelated to them. In the process of establishing a legal parent-child relationship, adoptive parents become part of a larger system of social services that is not experienced by most biological parents. All families formed through an adoption, including adoption agencies and the services they provide, are part of an exosystem.

In this regard, Doubell (2014: 163) found that adoptive parents need to be aware and well prepared for the realities of transracial adoption by receiving comprehensive support focussing on issues of race and culture, prior to adoption. Klevan's (2012:109) findings correspond with this, by noting that not all prospective adoptive parents are aware of racial challenges that accompany transracial adoption. Parents with a realistic perception of racial issues in the larger community adjust to becoming a transracial family with less challenges.

The above findings highlight the fundamental role played by the organisation in ensuring that prospective adoptive parents are sufficiently prepared for challenges which are unique to transracial adoption.

#### **3.2.3.1 Availability of support services**

From the ecological systems theory perspective, the experiences of adoptive parents with adoption specialists could have an influence on relationships with an adopted child. Services

are generally targeted to make an adoption experience smooth - to prepare parents to face challenges of needs a child may have and to teach them to meet the child's needs. Adopted children therefore either benefit or suffer, depending on the availability and quality of the educational and other services their prospective adoptive parents may receive. Frustration with a confusing system and conflicting interpersonal relationships with social workers can drain adoptive parents' emotional resources and lower their overall satisfaction with the adoption process. This ultimately spills over into a negative attitude about the child.

A qualitative study carried out by Valentine, Conway & Randolph (1988) on disrupted adoptions, confirm Schweiger and O'Brien's idea. The study found that adoptive parents believed adoption agency workers were unprofessional by not disclosing important facts about a child prior to an adoption (Verbovaya, 2016:201). This resulted in parental dissatisfaction with the adoption experience. Levy-Schiff, Goldschmidt & Har-Even (1991:135) state that adoptive parents who receive social services, are inclined to encounter a more positive adjustment. In examination of emerging support systems for adoptive parents, Hartinger-Saunders & Trouteaud (2015) note that supportive services for adoptive families are inadequate. Results of a survey of 562 families revealed that services adoptive parents required, included inaccurate information about the child before placement, education regarding how the child's previous abuse (when applicable) could manifest itself in the family and at which development stage this was likely to happen; financial and medical subsidies; adoptive parent support groups; counselling conducted by qualified professionals; and respite care (Rosenthal, Groze & Morgan, 1996:82).

Although a child is not directly involved in the relationships between parents and an adoption agency, the experiences of their adoptive parents, whether positive or negative, will have long-term effects on their beliefs and attitudes about adoption in general. Adoption agencies as an exosystem may bring many positive aspects to the lives of adoptive families, such as helping parents to adopt a child. Many agencies provide pre and post adoption services, aimed to enhance parenting skills, build healthy attachment with the child, learn interaction techniques and provide psychological support (Algood *et al*, Dozier & Rutter, Families for Russian and Ukrainian Adoptees; Schweiger & O'Brien; Swick & Williams, cited by Verbovaya, 2016).

Adoption organisations and adoption social workers inevitably carry the bulk of the responsibility of making the needed support available for adoptive parents, both pre and post adoption. Adequate preparation of transracial adoptive parents can ensure that parents are equipped for dealing with the realities of adoption. Support, focussing on issues of race and

culture prior to adoption would make prospective parents aware of racial challenges which may accompany transracial adoption. If parents have a more accurate perception of racial issues, adjustment to transracial adoption will be easier. Although parents may feel that they are adequately prepared to become transracial adoptive parents after pre-adoption support, the reality is never the same as the actuality. Post-adoption services in the form of support groups and family counselling then become essential. These services can help families to connect as a unit, guide them in managing challenges relating to parenting and racial issue, and offer access to necessary resources.

### **3.2.4 The Macrosystem**

The macrosystem refers to dominant social and economic structures and the attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies inherent in the systems of a particular society or culture. The cultural values may include obeying authority and respecting leaders of the community. These values will influence the proximal interactions in the child's microsystem and possibly in the whole mesosystem (Mahembe, 2012:25).

While not being a specific framework, this layer is comprised of cultural values, customs and laws, which filter down in countless ways to individual's daily lives. The effects of larger principles defined by the macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all the other layers. For example, it is the belief of the culture that parents should be solely responsible for raising their children. That culture is less likely to provide resources to support parents. This, in turn, affects the structures in which the parents function. The parents' ability or inability to carry out that responsibility toward their child within the context of the child's microsystem is likewise affected (Paquette & Ryan, 2009). Whether a child grows up in a nuclear or extended family household is strongly influenced by the culture's macrosystem (Papalia *et al.*, 2008:36).

Applying this idea to adoptive families, a larger society impacts the functioning of adoptive families. It is therefore crucial to explore parenting practices and expectations of children within a cultural framework, as cultural values influence adoptive parent's views on their roles in childrearing, which ultimately impacts on their child. Swick and Williams (2006:375) state that macrosystems provide an umbrella for multiple aspects of human lives binding them together. Therefore, the goal of social support, policies and governmental programs for children and families should be focused on preventing families from collapsing.

Historical events change social expectations of parenting, and these changes are reflected in adoption policies. (Schweiger & O'Brien, 2005:518). A fundamental change in the sphere of South Africa was made with the drawing of the constitutional era in 1994 (van der Walt: 2014:446). In the years following South Africa becoming a democracy, the country has become a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multiracial country where parents of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds employ diverse parenting practices.

Although race and culture form part of the macrosystem, these concepts were discussed in Chapter 2 (Legislation and Policy).

### **3.2.5 The Chronosystem**

The chronosystem is explained by Bronfenbrenner (2005) as the dynamics of a family within a historical context of itself and other systems. When applying this to children who are adopted internationally, a history of the child preceding the adoption, could explain the nature and quality of parent-child relationships. As previously mentioned, maternal and institutional deprivation and other challenges faced by a child prior to adoption, can have lasting negative effects that impact the family. Likewise, events in the lives of parents prior to an adoption influence how they relate to their adopted child. Santona & Zavattini, (2005:313) note that if parents experienced infertility and have tried unsuccessfully to conceive before deciding to adopt, they may not be emotionally prepared to love and meet the needs of an adoptee.

An example of the chronosystem affecting adoptive families, would be the rescinding of section 40(b) of the Child Care Act 74 of 1983 in 1991, when transracial adoptions became a reality in South Africa. (Ferreira, 2009:34). This was an historical event that changed the lives of contemporary adoptive families.

## **3.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

Literature confirms that the greatest challenge faced by adoptive parents is that of race. Louw (2009), notes that the majority of children in the child care and protection system who are eligible for adoption, are black; while Mokomane *et al.* (2011) state that currently in South Africa, white adoption applicants far exceed black adoption applicants. The outcome of this is that almost all adoptions in South Africa, are of a transracial nature.



As previously mentioned, insight into the challenges experienced by parents who adopt transracially in South Africa, is deficient. Due to this fact, much of the literature used in this chapter is dated. However, in the South African context, Doubell's (2014) study on views of social workers regarding transracial adoption of abandoned children, found that challenges such as considering the environment they will be raising their child in and exploring their preparedness to expose their adopted children to his or her birth culture, are challenges transracial adoptive parents face. In addition, they need to face their racial prejudices and contemplate what would be in the best interests of their child (Doubell, 2014:156). Findlay (2006:39, 42, 47, 49) concurs, noting racism, racial awareness, identity formation and teaching a child a second language, as some of the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents.

Camara (2014:27) notes that in South Africa, transracial adoptive mothers have to contend with opinions around their race, motherhood, their interracial relationship with their child, opinions on their interracial family and views around their competence to mother a child from a different racial and cultural background than their own. Although supported by the law, social support may be lacking. Similarly, the black adopted child is also impacted by society's perceptions of interracial relationships. They also need to contend with society's views and their impact on their social and interracial interactions. Although their experience of transracial adoption may affect parent and children differently, there are many similarities.

A transracial adoptive parent who was interviewed by Valby (2016), stated that attempts to ensure that their transracially adopted children won't experience any challenges related to being a person of colour, is unrealistic of adopted parents. "An adoptive parent's job to be a sturdy scaffold for kids to do their own work, not to tell them how to construct their identities."

Both parents and adoptees face many obstacles throughout the adoption process. Parental challenges consist of parenting competency, available resources, parents' past family dynamics, cultural identity and cultural considerations of the adoptee. These factors, combined with the lengthy process, policies and procedures of adopting, can create a rich and complex family dynamic (Watson, Stern & Foster, 2012:434). Adopting a child transracially, adds another component, thereby highlighting already existing challenges.

According to *Cultural issues for trans-cultural adoptions* (2015), many adoptive parents adopt transracially believing that "love is enough." While love is a beneficial starting point when making the decision to adopt transracially, it isn't enough. The parents of children of transracial families need to redefine their own traditional family. For a child of a different



culture to adapt and evolve into an emotionally healthy and mature adult, the parent must develop a multicultural family. One which embraces the child's culture (*Cultural issues for trans-cultural adoptions*, 2015).

According to Boivin & Hassan (2015: 1090) transracial adoption itself does not produce psychological or social maladjustment problems in children and children adopted from foster care suffer more risk factors. Recent studies carried out in the United States of America, regarding transracial adoption measuring racial and ethnic experiences of adoptees and how these experiences may contribute to psychological adjustment, have found parents' attitudes and behaviours related to racial socialization affect their transracially adopted children's outcomes on a range of variables. Parents can play a crucial role in providing opportunities for their children to experience multiracial systems and heritages as both unique and shared.

Transracial adoption in South Africa is unique, as the racial minority adopt from the racial majority. Comparably, Samuels (2009) carried out research in the United States, focusing on black children being raised by white parents. Samuels noted that multiracial families are increasing and although they are a dominant group, they are also a hidden group. Aspects of the experiences explored, were: (1) centrality yet absence of racial resemblance, (2) navigating discordant parent-child racial experiences, and (3) managing societal perceptions of transracial adoption. These aspects will be discussed in more detail in the section which follows.

Both South African and international literature on challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents focus comprehensively on racism and culture of the adoptee. Furthermore, in her study, the researcher became aware of the fact that literature on transracial adoption challenges, from the adoptee's perspective, gives invaluable insight into the challenges faced by their adoptive parents. These challenges will be discussed, using literature to substantiate this.

### **3.3.1 Absence of racial resemblance**

A racialized physical resemblance marks one's membership in a racial-ethnic community; whereas absence thereof, neglects this association. The dominant frame for legitimizing kinship ties is through one's resemblance to other family members in physical and personal traits. Becker, Butler & Nachtigall, (cited by Samuels, 2009), maintain that our sense of self, familial belonging, and very existence, is authenticated by whom one "looks like" in the family.

Transracial adoption and multiraciality symbolizes an adoption experience synonymous with a chronic sense of racial difference. Findlay (2006:42) noted that children notice differences between themselves and their parents as well as between the people around them. Wright (2000:19) implies that it is normal for pre-school adoptive children to openly acknowledge that they are a different race to their parents, and in some instances, express that they would like to change their own colour. Their egocentricity and belief that their skin colour is not permanent, is in line with their developmental phase.

Often, parents do not discuss racism in advance of the child's experience of it. Discussions about race, ethnicity or racism only occur when it is a problem that the children bring to the attention of the parents. Because some adoptive parents do not know how to deal with the acknowledgment thereof, they could find the situation challenging. Valby (2016) admits that many adoptive parents feel tremendous anxiety around broaching the subject of racism with their children. Inadequacy and powerlessness are fears that adoptive parents associate with introducing the subject. However, Hagland (cited by Valby, 2016) states that, "It is inevitable that black children will be othered for being black. So if you prepare them for that you are helping them."

The Evan. B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, an adoption research and policy organisation, reported in 2008, that black children had a greater sense of racial pride when their parents acknowledge racial identity, moved to integrated neighbourhoods and provided role models of the same race. The report also found that black children whose white parents minimize the importance of racial identity became reluctant to identify themselves racially (Valby, 2016).

One physical challenge noted by both Findlay (2006) and Morrison (2004), was that white parents who adopt black children may not know how to care for their child's skin and hair. Findlay (2006:49) reported many transracial adoptive parents feeling judged for the way in which they managed their child's hair. According to Morrison (2004), this situation can be easily remedied by the adoptive mother seeking out instruction to remedy this problem. It may also serve as an opportunity for establishing connections or friendships between adults of different races, which could not only be helpful to the adoptive parent, but could also contribute to the alleviation of overall racial tension in society by promoting mutual understanding amongst people of different races.

Steinberg and Hall (2000:319) claim that young children need to feel handsome and beautiful to take pride in themselves and if their hair becomes a source of frustration for both them and the parent, it may impact negatively on self-esteem. Parents should allow children to make decisions regarding their hair because their desire to look a certain way is more than likely based on their longing to fit in with their peers. Parents should therefore be cautious in making value judgements about what may be considered an appropriate black or white hairstyle. Melina (2002:211) states that while parents should comment positively on their child's appearance, they should develop racial awareness in their children by pointing out differences. The challenge is to discuss differences the child may have in a natural and spontaneous way rather than racially stereotyping by grouping people by physical and differences or similarities. In this regard, Doubell (2014:178, 179) recommended that adoption organisations need to recognise cultural competence of prospective adoptive parents (racial awareness; survival skills and multicultural planning) as a focal point in the screening and preparation process for parents wishing to adopt transracially. Furthermore, prospective adoptive parents are encouraged to attend support groups as a channel for networking with other parents who have adopted transracially - thereby creating a platform for sharing concerns and knowledge.

### **3.3.2 Racial awareness of adoptive parents**

When adoptive parents choose to become a family that is different to the majority, they must be willing to confront their own racial awareness, as everyone carries internalised attitudes about race, whether overt or subtle (Steinberg and Hall, 2000:40). Doubell (2014:177) noted that when a transracial adoption placement is inevitable, it is important to consider how the adoptive parents will approach race/ethnicity. Racial awareness and resolution of prospective adoptive parents were identified as key factors for consideration in the matching process of adoption.

South Africa has a history of racial prejudice and discrimination, and it is impossible to overlook the fact that South Africans exist in a society where racism and prejudice are part of reality (Findlay, 2006:40). According to King (2012), many parents who adopt children transracially, engage in the attitude that race is of no consequence. However, this attitude denies the experience of people of colour, as the world is not colour blind. Parents should acknowledge that challenges around race do exist and that they should equip their children to deal with these challenges.

Steinberg & Hall (2002:103) state that parents in this stage often wish that they were the same race as their child because if they were, they wouldn't feel so incompetent to teach and support their child in what they suddenly recognise as a racist world. The pressure and stress felt by parents learning how to navigate transracial relationships while keeping their children's safety and long-term health in mind, can be overwhelming.

Steinberg & Hall (2002:42) maintain that as well as understanding how their children are experiencing a certain situation, parents who adopt transracially must speak openly and frankly with their children. Racism does exist and adoptive parents must acknowledge that all individuals experience it at one time or another in their lives. Children who are adopted transracially have a family of one race, but by definition and skin colour are of another race. According to Melina (2002:229), the challenge is enabling children of transracial adoption to feel that they can be loyal to both races. In this respect, Wright (2000:20) indicates that parents who adopt transracially must be more vigilant in their handling of racial awareness. The challenge is to present the best of both racial and ethnic groups for children so they can have an appreciation for their own race and ethnicity and that of their adoptive families.

However, Samuels' (2016) research found that many transracial adoptees reported parents as being 'reactive' towards racism, instructing their children to deal with racism more passively. This included dismissing racism in the same context as childhood name-calling and justifying that the offender was flawed. Parents suggested it was the offender's loss and not the child's if the racial intimidation continued. This resulted in many children experiencing a sense of loss when the racism continued, some with extended family. For most, these family members were either excluded from the child's life or had a "change of heart" and grew to accept the child. Change on the part of the extended family typically involved seeing the child as an exception or viewing them as "not really black".

Furthermore, Samuels (2016) revealed that parents of this generation of adopted multiracials were often described as unable to appreciate the unique weight of racial labels when their child was targeted by one of them. As one participant noted, "There was this huge disconnect between what I was taught and what was outside". Ultimately, parental colourblindness meant that children were often left to navigate a racialized world on their own. Upon leaving home, many realized despite some advantages, growing up in a white community led to a loss of self and racial kinship. Many participants explained leaving home as a search for racial diverse

communities as opposed to seeking economic opportunity. One participant remarked, “I felt as if I stayed I would have died on a certain level”.

Doubell (2014) found that the need to continually expose their adopted child to his/her cultural roots of origin, is important to explore with parents who are adopting transracially. Social workers would evidently not have to cover this aspect of counselling with parents who adopt same-race children, as they are exposed to their culture on a day to day basis. This finding is also stressed in literature, which emphasizes the fact that adopted children need to be allowed the opportunity to learn about and understand their cultural/racial roots (Farber *et al.*, 2003:191; Klevan, 2012:113).

### **3.3.3 Protection of child’s heritage**

Schoeman (2006), director of Cotlands, Gauteng, believes that a real challenge with transracial adoption is protecting the child’s cultural heritage. Transracial adoptive parents often express a strong need to protect their child’s culture and birth mother tongue but the challenge is how to ensure that this transpires. Schoeman (2006) adds that the challenge lies in how, where and when to expose children to their cultural heritage and how to encourage an appreciation for this culture.

Willeboordse (2017), a therapist who works with both families and individually with children, emphasises the importance of having ongoing conversations regarding the journey of how the adoption took place. She adds that it shouldn’t be a “challenging event that occurs once.” Willeboordse (2017) adds that if this information is kept from an adopted child until they’re older, it will be more challenging for them to believe that their adoption was a positive event. Furthermore, she suggests having an adoption story which is unique to the child, and making it part of the daily routine, such as a nightly ritual. How the parents learned about the child; the first time they saw the child and held them; the place they were united; and what the weather was like on that day, should form part of the story. “What was memorable for the parents will become memorable for the child” (Tartakovsky, 2017).

Freedgood (2017), an adoptive parent and therapist who leads adoptive support groups, elaborates on this, by suggesting talking about adoption regularly, and well before the child understands it. “Start talking to your child about their adoption right away—even if your child is a toddler. This way it won’t be a surprise to them. Keep it very simple, and keep it

appropriate to the child's age". For instance, "before the age of 5, all kids need to know is that they are adopted, and it's a way to form a family." Also, emphasize that you are a "forever family." (Tartakovsky, 2017).

Due to the fact that transracial adoption is conspicuous, transracially adopted children will eventually become aware of the fact that they are a different colour to their parents. To avoid this fact being brought to their attention by others, it is imperative for transracially adoptive parents to prepare their children for this possibility, by providing them with age appropriate ways of understanding that they are adopted.

Freedgood (2017) notes that there's an expectation for adoptive children to only feel happy and grateful. The reality is that adopted children may be grieving for the loss of their biological family. Adoptive parents need to give their children the space to grieve their loss and to have a range of emotions about their adoption (Tartakovsky, 2017).

Many transracial adoptive parents do not have sufficient knowledge about their adopted child's culture and therefore, one of the primary strategies for exposing the child to his or her culture is to have contact with the child's birth community. Unfortunately, cultural exposure will be limited if the family lives in a predominantly white neighbourhood.

In Samuels' (2009) study, a small group of parents chose to live in diverse neighbourhoods, moving the entire family out of a predominantly white community. The study found that most participants grew up in families and neighbourhoods that were predominantly white. Many had never been in a room with mostly multiracial people and some had never seen anyone who was the same race as them. All participants reported feeling racially alienated in lacking access to a community of others who could share in their experiences of race.

Challenges such as facing discrimination from their community about the cultural makeup of their new family member, can be an additional challenge adoptive parents face. Research demonstrates that families are frequently unprepared to accommodate the child's cultural identity and often downplay the child's culture of origin in favour of their own (Harf, Skandrani, Sibeoni, Pontvert, Revah-Levy & Moro, 2015).

Understanding a child's culture is integral in bringing a child to join a new family dynamic, especially if the child's age indicates exposure to culture-specific memories. An example could be the child remembering certain foods eaten, which were specific to his or her culture.

Park (2012:492) states that in the area of parenting related to introducing the child to their birth culture and allowing them to explore this culture, transracial adoptive parents have little confidence, and acknowledge that they have limited knowledge about their child's birth culture. Although most parents have a desire to encourage their adopted child's exposure to his or her birth culture, they do not have specific plans for doing so. Parents hope that cultural learning will happen naturally once the child shows more interest. If a strong interest is not shown by the child, many adoptive parents choose not to "force" cultural engagement. Park (2012:494) found that the majority of parents who participated in his study, structured their family life in ways that mirrored how they had been raised. They tried to provide socioeconomic advantages for their children by providing them with better education and opportunities than were had by earlier generations.

Paulsen and Merighi (2009:8) reported that exposing the adoptee to their culture of origin, resulted in the adoptive parents deriving more satisfaction from the adoption process. Parents who fail to promote and integrate their child's cultural identity can result in the child experiencing a sense of cultural identity confusion. Goller-Sojourner (cited by Valby, 2016), observed that advocates for diversity want adoptive parents to admit that it's their own anxiety over the idea of exposing their adopted child to their birth culture which makes them uncomfortable.

Steinberg and Hall (2000:251) claim that learning a second language which links the transracially adopted child to those who share their ethnicity, is invaluable. Learning their birth mother tongue can contribute to the adopted child having a connection to their birth culture, as well as minimising encounters with prejudice.

As well as considering the adoptee's culture, the adopting family must also consider its own cultural makeup when adopting. Single parents, blended families, same-sex couples, transracial couples or other non-traditional combination may present specific challenges for the family. For example, transracial and same-sex couples wanting to adopt may face discrimination from a number of sources such as governmental laws, the adoption agency and friends and family (Blaume & Compton, 2011:103). Such discrimination reduced the number



of resources the family can utilize and adds to the difficulties and stressors that may affect the adoptive parents.

While claiming that their children's race does not matter to them, some adoptive parents still raise their children within Western traditions. This is particularly evident in families who adopt internationally, but not transracially. The absence of racial differences between adoptive parents and children, tends to minimize cultural differences in the eyes of adoptive parents (Marre & Briggs, cited by Verbovaya, 2016:202). Doubell (2014:155) found that if parents are able to place value on their child's racial heritage, their child may be more likely to adopt a positive attitude towards their cultural and racial origins. In families where racial and cultural differences of a child are celebrated and the child is exposed to traditions of their birth culture, children are found to have higher self-esteem and have an optimistic outlook on life. Algood *et al.* (2011:1144) suggest establishing culturally sensitive policies and programs addressing the needs of adoptive families. Cultural competence on the part of the adoptive parent, ensures that the adopted child is not necessarily uprooted from their cultural origins (Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2012:11).

### 3.3.4 Managing societal perceptions of transracial adoption

Participants of Samuel's (2009) study, said that managing societal perceptions of transracial adoption had been a challenge. Due to witnessing public controversies over the "horrors of adoption", participants were extremely conscious of the negative constructions of their families and themselves. The majority sought out experiences with black peers or in a black community at various times of their lives. They found that being raised by white parents hindered their acceptance as legitimate members of a black community. In adulthood, although most felt comfortable sharing their transracial adoptive backgrounds, some described the importance of disclosing both stigmatized identities in advance, to avoid discomfort in friendships with black peers in an attempt to explain why their racial appearance does not match their behaviour. Most participants tested potential friends or partners by sharing their family background to see the honest reaction to their families. When people reacted negatively, they were no longer considered close friends or ideal partners.

Coughlin and Abromowitz (cited by Findlay, 2006:41) found that transracial adoptive parents required assistance in **managing impending difficult questions** from both adults and children. For this reason, they compiled a book of questions and answers. Their recommendation is that



it is important for questions to be answered correctly to protect the adopted child's sense of belonging and identity. Although adopted parents are entitled to their privacy, they are encouraged to answer questions honestly, while only sharing necessary information. According to Morrison (2004:185), white parents who adopt black children are regularly asked intrusive questions. They will have to answer questions about adoption much earlier and more often than they would have had their children not been transracially adopted. Although many parents who adopt transracially face hostility, intrusiveness, and prejudice, parents report that they receive more positive than negative attention.

There tends to be a disheartening response to stories of transracial adoption, especially when adoptees share experiences of uncertainty or pain – that **adoptees should be grateful** considering the alternatives. However, to ask adoptees to quieten down because they were fortunate enough to be removed from an orphanage or foster care, is to deny the notion that every child has the right to the best possible home with a family who is willing and able to meet their needs (Valby, 2016). Jeong Trenka (2003:130), states that the burden of reflective gratitude can cripple an adoptee's emotional growth. "How can you build an authentic relationship of love and trust with a person to whom you've been made to feel you owe a debt?"

Finally, the institutions that promote adoption and oversee the process present a challenge for prospective adoptive parents. The adoption organisations, adoption social workers and laws that regulate adoption add another dimension to the **adoption process**. To advocate for the best interests of the adoptee, social workers generally evaluate the eligibility of adoptive parents based on applicable laws and organisational policies. Although this role is essential to guarantee the safety and happiness of both the child and family, the social worker's role as an evaluator would not explore the complex issues both the adoptee and prospective parents bring to the process (Noordegraaf, Nijnatten & Elbers, cited by Watson *et al.*, 2012:434).

Parents may begin to doubt their parental abilities as they complete several questionnaires that examine all aspects of their lives. This may cause the applicants completing the adoption application to respond to questions with socially desirable responses to avoid implications from the adoption agency. However, declining to work through suppressed issues during the adoption process may negatively influence the family dynamic in the future (Watson *et al.*, 2012:436).

### **3.4 THE ROLE OF THE ADOPTION ORGANISATION AND ADOPTION SOCIAL WORKERS**

The responsibility of offering necessary support to adoptive parents, both before and after adoption has been finalised, lies with adoption organisations and adoption social workers. Rotabi and Bunkers (2011:9) identify social workers as being fundamental resources in reducing the risk of children losing their cultural identities in transracial adoptions. Social workers need to accurately assess prospective parents' commitment to explore the cultural heritage of their adopted child so that they are able to contribute to the cultural socialisation of their child.

On-going post adoption support is imperative and should be acknowledged by adoption organisations. In a study carried out by De Haymes & Simon (2003:265), the researchers found that several families reported feeling that they were not adequately supported by social workers in their decision to adopt transracially. Parents identified black social workers as being opposed to the decision to adopt transracially. In addition, parents reported post-adoption services as being disappointing, and cited experiencing occurrences of racism due to their decision to adopt transracially (De Haymes & Simon, 2003:266).

In contrast to this, a study by Sagar and Hitchings (2007) reported social workers stressed the importance of adoptive parents obtaining post-adoptive services. However, they noted that many parents did not make use of these services. Reasons for this are believed to be fear of being judged, having their child removed from their care; or parents from privileged backgrounds being ashamed to seek help from social workers who usually work with people from a lower-socio-economic class (Sagar & Hitchings, 2007:208).

Doubell (2014:87) states that post adoption support is essential in assisting parents who have adopted transracially. Support should include reassurance and access to resources which can assist them in developing their skills of cultural competence (Vonk, Lee & Crolley-Simic, 2010:246). In this regard, Carter-Black (2007:351) indicates that it is essential that a family planning to adopt transracially needs to be prepared and ready for the commitment. Carter-Black (2007:362) clarifies that black social workers in their study felt that if white families were willing and able to commit to raising a black child, they should be able to instil a healthy sense of racial identity. It is apparent that social workers have an essential role to play, as it the social worker who will assess how prepared and committed the prospective adoptive parents are, to adopt transracially.

The immense responsibility of ensuring that adequate support is offered to adoptive parents both pre and post adoption, lies with the adoption organisations and adoption social workers. Their responsibility includes providing prospective adoptive parents with the necessary support if they are unprepared, and developing their skills of cultural competence, which needs to be developed by social workers if they are to develop it in others. Social workers should therefore become more competent and effective between managing the overlap between child care and race both before and after transracial adoption takes place.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter described a need for theory in social work and how the ecological perspective can be used in a theoretical framework for transracial adoption. The ecological perspective allows for a better understanding of how transracial adoptive parents are affected through social networks, families, community resources, government structures and community development organisations. Each of these layers impact on the experiences of the parent/s, thereby influencing their behaviour.

In the chapter which follows, the researcher will investigate the views of transracial adoptive parents in South Africa. The investigation should disclose the challenges they face in their journey to becoming parents of a child of another race.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION ON THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TRANSRACIAL ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

#### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

In South Africa, the majority of children available for adoption are black, while the majority of prospective adoptive parents are white (Louw, cited by Gerrand & Nathane-Taulela, 2013:4). Transracial adoption therefore, becomes a reality when securing placements for children in need of care and protection. When considering the current status on adoption in South African, the fact that research is sorely lacking; the number of abandoned children is extremely high and there is a disparity between population groups of adoptable children and prospective adoptive parents, a study on challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents in the South African context, seemed appropriate.

This chapter comprises of the results obtained from the empirical investigation with regards to the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents. The chapter aims to meet the third objective of this research study, namely to investigate the challenges experienced by adoptive parents when adopting transracially. Data will be presented by means of tables and figures, as well as interpretations of narratives provided by the participants.

The chapter will commence with a description of the research methodology applied, thereafter the results from the empirical investigation will be divided into five key sections. The first section presents the identifying particulars of the participants. In the second section, the empirical investigation results in relation to biological and adopted children are discussed. In the third section, experiences of transracial adoptive parents with regards to the adoption process, are discussed. The challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents are considered in the fourth section, and the last section closes with additional comments by transracial adoptive parents, not covered in previous sections.

Data presented in this chapter was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with transracial adoptive parents in the Western Cape. The chapter layout is therefore representative of the semi-structures interview schedule. References to the literature study as provided in chapters two and three and discussions regarding its relationship to the

presented data will also be provided. This will allow for appropriate deductions, regarding the identified themes, subthemes and related categories, to be made.

## **4.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

The empirical investigation was conducted as outlined in chapter one of the research study. The research approach, including the research design, research method and method of data analysis for the research study will be discussed.

### **4.2.1 Preparation for the Investigation**

The following section is an overview of the research methodology adopted for the successful execution of the research study.

### **4.2.2 Research Sample**

The sample for the study was made up of 20 transracial adoptive parents. All participants therefore were parents to children they had adopted, who were of a different race to them.

The criteria for inclusion of the sample for the study were as follows:

- (1) Parent(s) who had adopted a child transracially and lived in the Western Cape.
- (2) Parent(s) whose transracially adopted child was between the ages of 2 to 10 years old.
- (3) Parent(s) who had adopted a child who was of a different race to the parent(s).
- (4) Parent(s) who were either in a heterosexual relationship or single. (If in a heterosexual relationship, one parent from each family was interviewed). Parents decided which one of them would be interviewed.
- (5) Parent(s) who had adopted a child transracially within the last 10 years.
- (6) Parent(s) who had adopted a child transracially, who were available and willing to participate in the study in that they were fully aware of what the study entailed, and participated of their own free will.

### **4.2.3 Research approach, design and instrument**

The qualitative approach was employed for the purpose of obtaining the aim of the study (McLaughlin, 2012:36; De Vos et al., 2011:433). Qualitative research is concerned with “describing and understanding human behaviour; naturalistic observation; and the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider” (De Vos et al., 2011:433). The study

was based on the subjective views of transracial adoptive parents, which were obtained through one on one detailed and in-depth interviews.

Exploratory design and descriptive design were both used in the research study (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:43; De Vos *et al.*, 2011:95-96; Creswell, 2009:26). The use of these designs enabled for the proper utilisation of qualitative design elements. The semi-structured interview schedule designed by the researcher was utilised during one-on-one in-depth interviews with transracial adoptive parents to gather data about the challenges experienced by adoptive parents when adopting transracially.

#### **4.2.4 Data gathering and analysis**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to collected data (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:397). Since the approach for this study and the data collected was qualitative in nature, the study adopted qualitative data analysis, to evaluate the data obtained throughout the study. De Vos *et al.*, (2011:397) maintain that the purpose of conducting both quantitative and qualitative studies, is to produce findings. Patton (2002) cited in De Vos *et al.* (2011:397), concurs, noting that the purpose of qualitative analysis is to transform data into findings. Analysis would entail reducing large volumes of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework that would allow for communication of key findings (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:397). The qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews is organised into themes, sub-themes and categories, based on the views of the participants. All the themes, sub-themes and categories are presented in table form before being discussed in further detail. The existing relationship between the data and the literature study presented in the previous two chapters are also evaluated (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:402).

### **4.3 RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

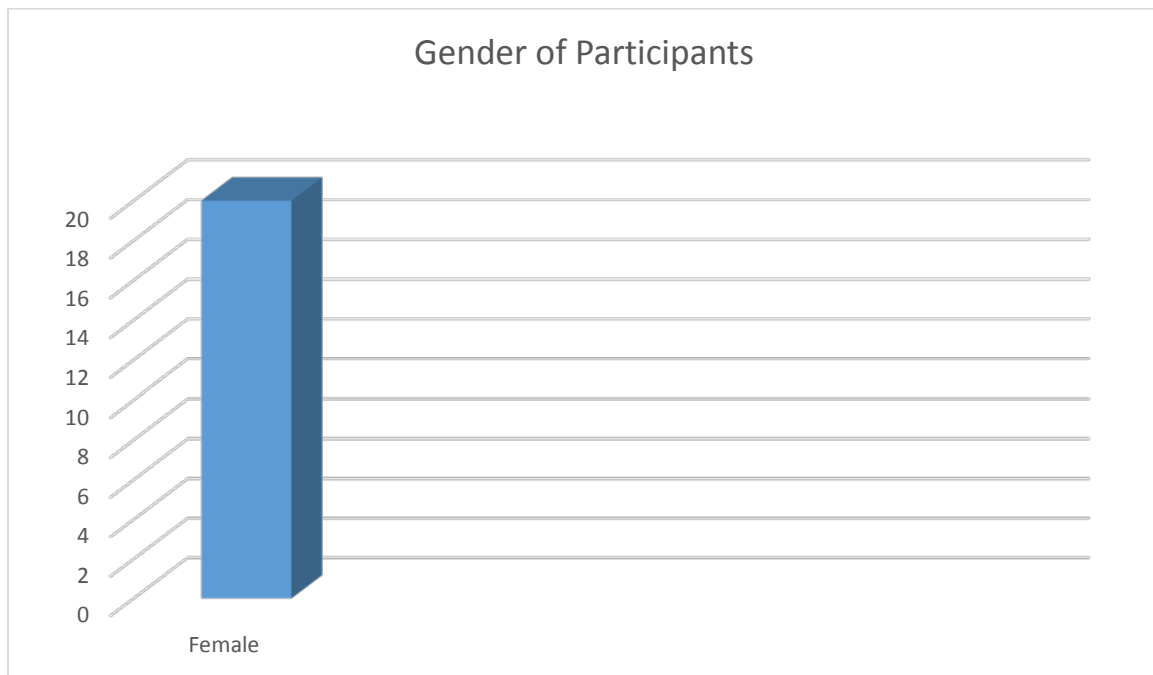
In this section the results of the study will be discussed. The identifying particulars of the participants are discussed, followed by a discussion of the other themes and sub-themes that emerged in the study.

### 4.3.1 Profile of the Participants

The identifying particulars of the participants will be presented in terms of the gender of the participants, age, marital status, education and/or training, population group and current employment of the participants.

#### 4.3.1.1 Gender of the Participants

All participant in the study were female. The results are presented in Figure 4.1.



**N=20**

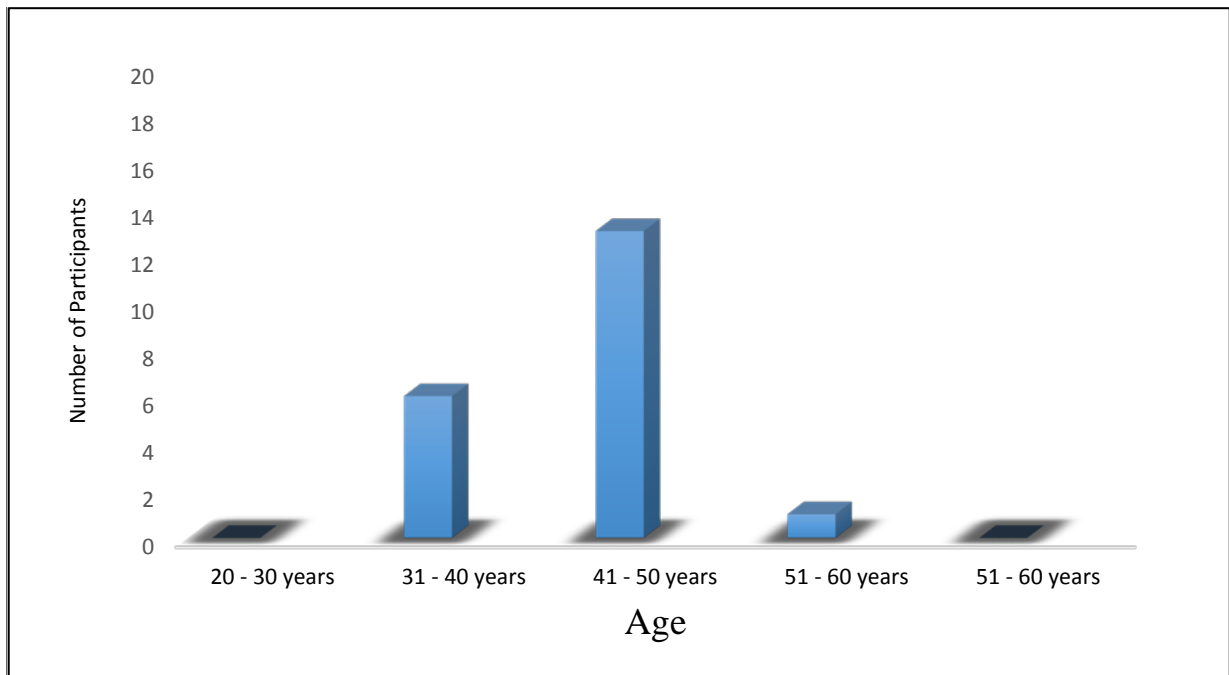
**Figure 4.1 Gender of Participants**

Figure 4.1 indicates that all the participants were female.

In two-parent families, participants were given the option to propose one parent to be interviewed. All families which consisted of parents of both genders, made the decision for the mother of the adopted child/children to be interviewed. This resulted in all participants in the study being female.

#### 4.3.1.2 Age of the Participants

The participants were asked to indicate their age. The results are presented in Figure 4.2.



**N=20**

**Figure 4.2 Age of Participants**

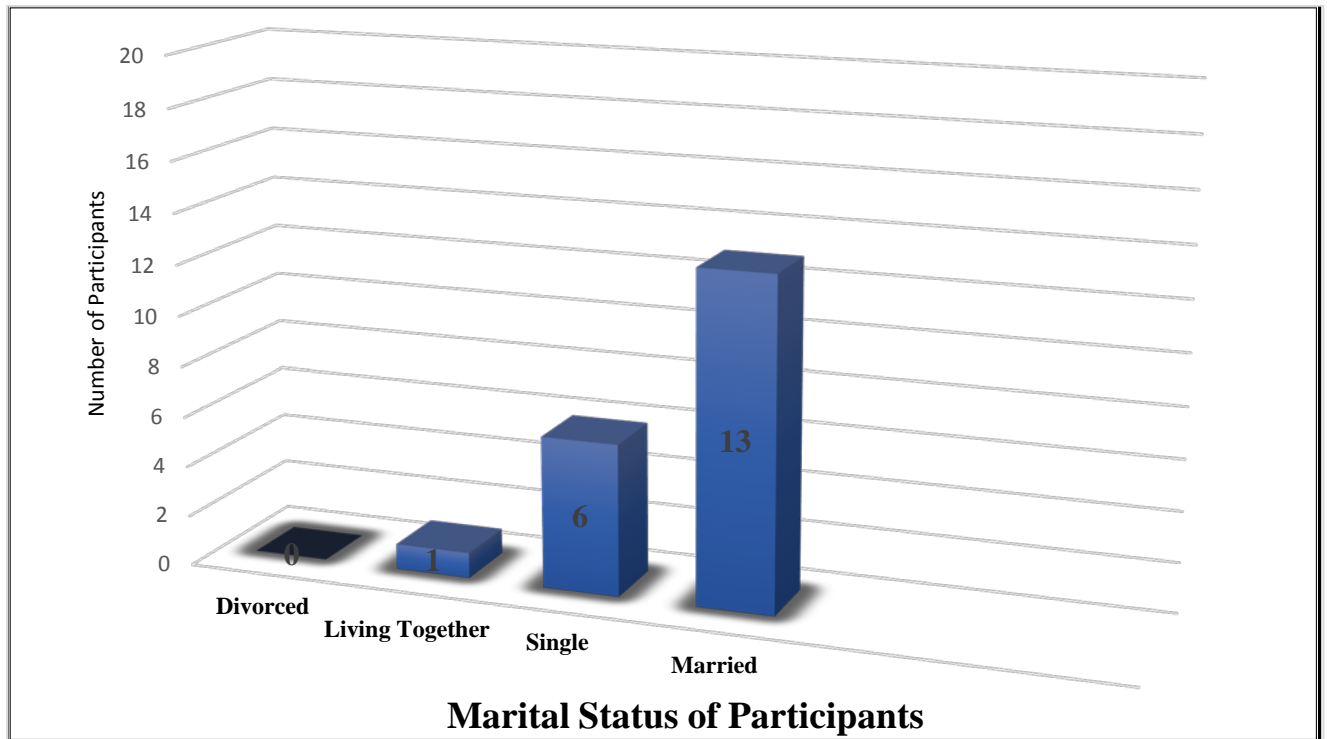
Figure 4.2 indicates that most participants were between the ages of forty one and fifty years old, while more than a quarter of the participants were in the age group of thirty one to forty years. There was only one participant in the fifty one to sixty years age group.

It is concluded that the majority of participants are middle-aged, over the age of forty one. Although the ages of the adopted children of the participants varied, it can be deduced that the majority of participants were between that ages of thirty one and forty at the time of adoption. The above findings are consistent with research carried out by Mokomane & Rochat (2011:8) in South Africa, which indicated that the age group for prospective adoptive parents in the White community is much younger than that of Black prospective adoptive parents.



#### 4.3.1.3 Marital Status of the Participants

The participants were asked to indicate their marital status. The results are presented in Figure 4.3.



N=20

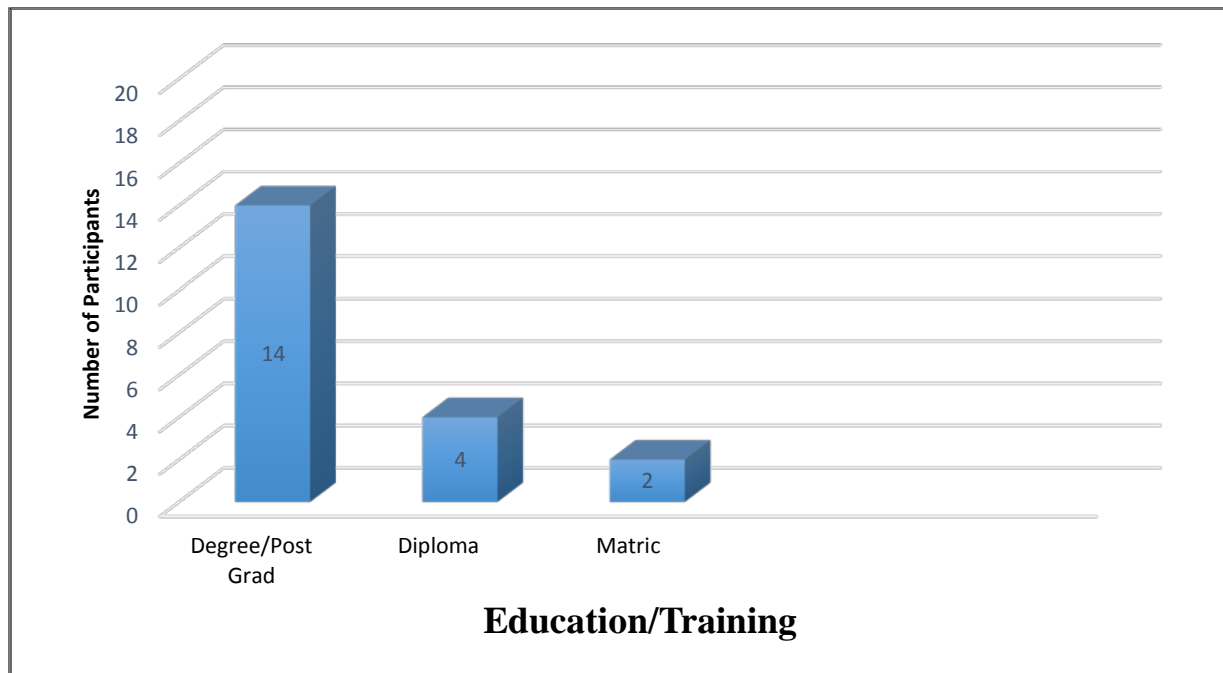
**Figure 4.3: Marital Status of Participants**

Figure 4.3 indicates that the majority of the participants indicated that they were married. More than a quarter of the participants were single, and one participant was living together with her partner.

This finding is in contrast to that of Mokomane & Rochat (2011:8), who found that the majority of adopters in South Africa were single or unmarried. The disparity that the majority of participants in this study were married and those in the above author's study were single or unmarried, could be linked to the trend of social responsibility adoption rather than following traditional routes such as marriage and biological childbearing.

#### 4.3.1.4 Education/Training of Participants

The participants were asked to indicate their education or training. The results are presented in Figure 4.4.



N=20

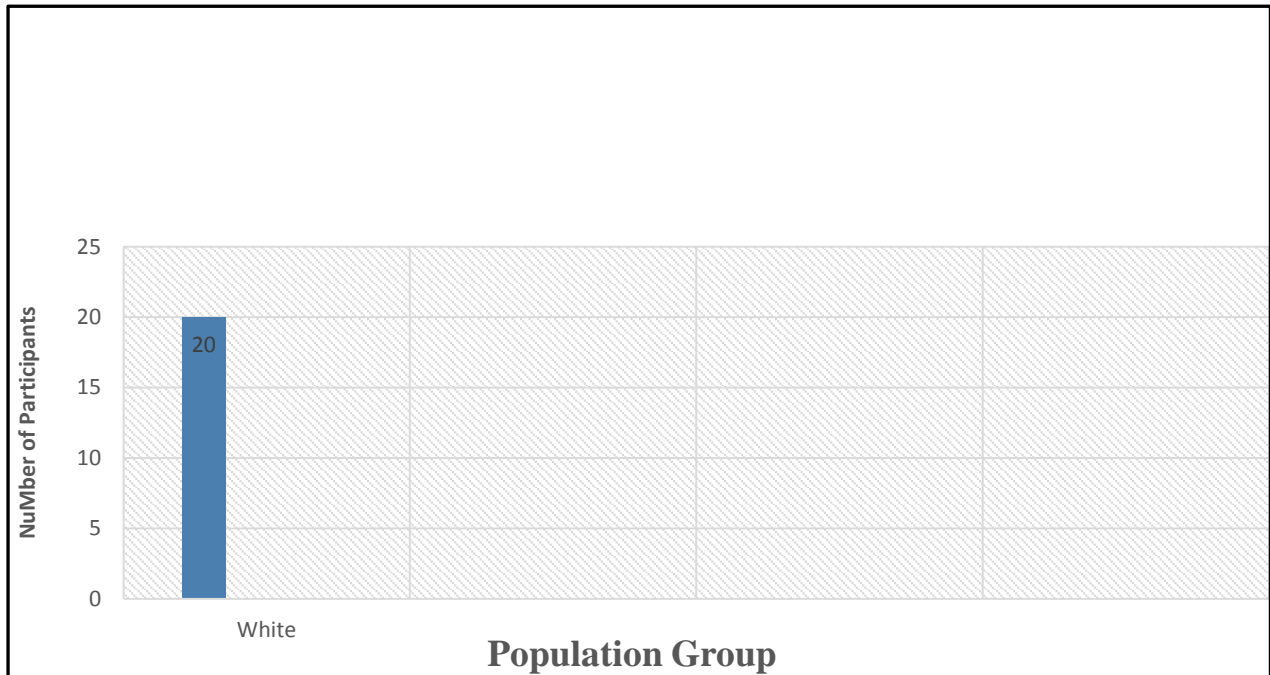
**Figure 4.4: Education/Training of Participants**

Figure 4.4 specifies that all of the participants had completed matric. The majority of these indicated that post matric, they had obtained a degree or post graduate degree, with less than a quarter of the participants stating that they had obtained post matric education in the form of diplomas.

The results indicating the education and training of participants, are consistent with research carried out in South Africa by Mokomane & Rochat (2011:8), who found that most white prospective adoptive parents are highly educated. Similarly, Morrison (2004:195) found that in the United States of America, parents who adopt transracially are well educated. The researcher found that almost all the participants in her study group had completed at least college and the majority of participants held a graduate degree.

#### 4.3.1.5 Population Group of Participants

The participants were asked to indicate their population group. The results are presented in Figure 4.5.



**N=20**

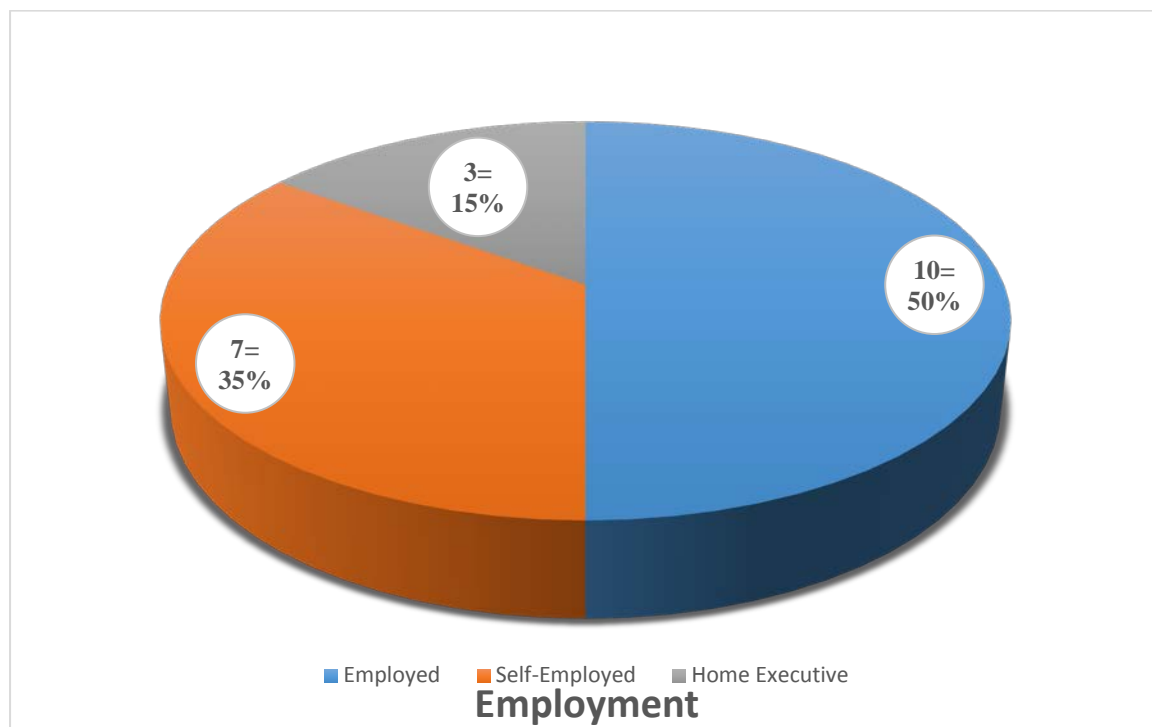
**Figure 4.5: Population of Participants**

Figure 4.5 reveals that all of the participants were from the white population group. The finding is consistent with a study done by Blackie (2014). A viable motivation for the white population group adopting children across the colour line according to Blackie (2014), is that most black citizens find that the legal adoption process in South Africa does not concur with their cultural and ancestral beliefs. These citizens perceive adoption as severing the child's relationship with his or her family of origin and clan roots. This can result in severe implications for the adopted child's lineage and well-being. Furthermore, there is extreme pressure on black women to prove their fertility and meet the lineage requirements. Giving birth to a child will fulfil these requirements.

Ntonga (2014) enhances this, by stating that black children are placed with white families, as being placed within a stable family environment, even though race and culture may differ, is considered a more suitable option than the child being raised in a children's home.

#### 4.3.1.6 Employment of Participants

The participants were asked to indicate their employment. The results are presented in Figure 4.6.



N=20

**Figure 4.6: Employment of Participants**

Figure 4.6 indicates that the majority of the participants were employed (either by employers or self-employed), while only a few participants were home executives. Current literature corresponds with this finding. The African Christian Democratic Party MP Cheryllyn Dudley, recently made history for successfully piloting a Bill that provides clarity on leave for employees who adopt young children. (The African Christian Democratic Party are a South African political party which consists of mainly conservative Christians. Its doctrine focuses on social issues such as abortion, homosexuality and pornography). Previously, adoptive parents had to either take family responsibility leave or annual leave after adopting their child. The Bill, which has been in the making for four years, was accepted by the Labour Laws

Amendment Bill on 28 November 2017. (*Time off work breakthrough for adoptive parents*. 2017).

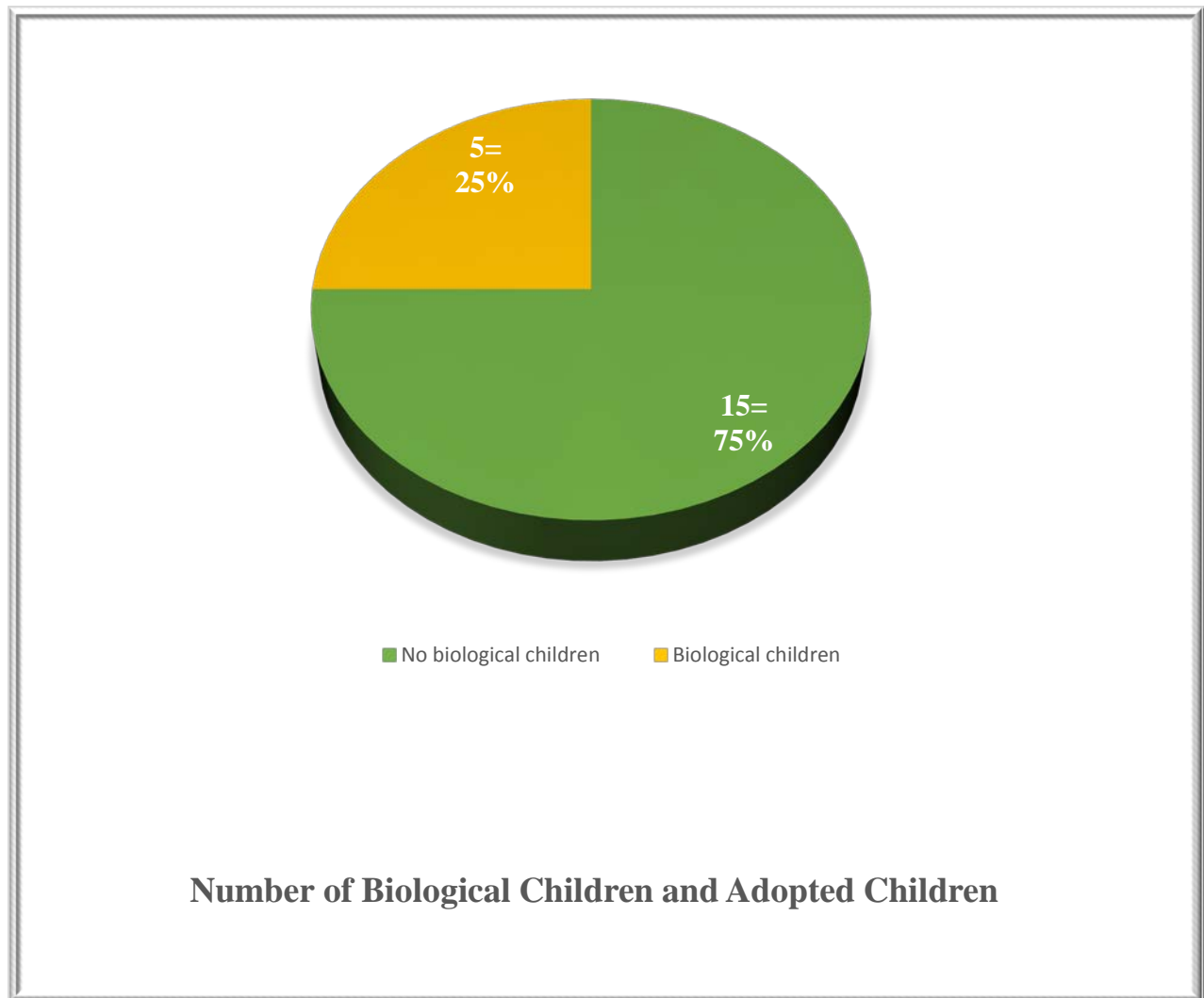
It can be surmised that the above-mentioned Bill would not have been passed, had maternity and paternity leave not affected an adequate amount of adoptive parents. In order for this to have had an impact on them, they would have had to have been employed.

### **4.3.2 Biological and Adopted Children**

Particulars of the participants' children will be presented with regards to how many children (biological and adopted) participants had, the race of the adopted child/children, the age of the adopted child/children when adopted and the current age of the adopted children.

#### **4.3.2.1 Number of Biological and Adopted Children**

The participants were asked to indicate how many children they had, and to specify how many children were adopted and how many children were biological. The results are presented in Figure 4.7.



**N=20**

#### **Figure 4.7 Biological and Adopted Children**

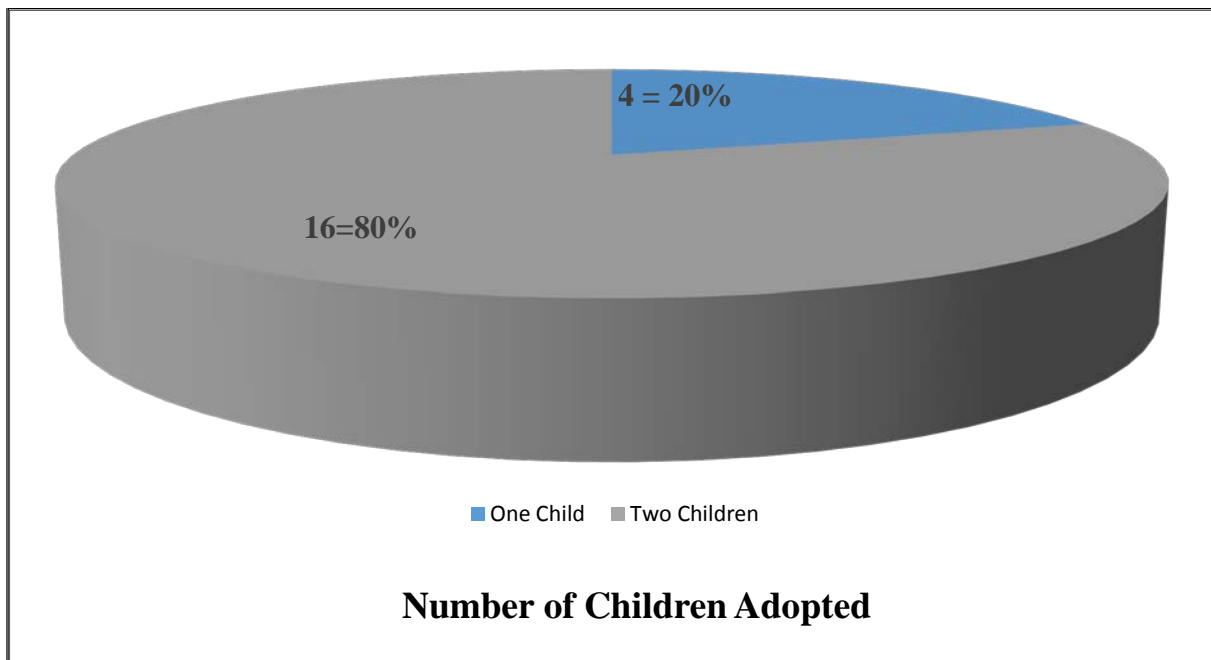
Figure 4.7 clearly displays that three quarters of the participants had no biological children, while a quarter of the participants had borne biological children. One participant had three biological children, one participant had two biological children, and three participants had one biological child. Of the five participants who indicated that they had biological children, four participants had had biological children before adopting a child or children. One participant had first adopted a child before having a biological child.

Doubell (2014) found that the majority of adoptive parents did not have biological children and that the most common reason for white adoptive parents to adopt, was the inability to have their own child. According to Pedro and Andipatin (2014), the incidence of infertility in South Africa is estimated at between 15% - 20% of couples of reproductive age. Moreover,

Mokomane & Rochat (2011:9) state that many single adults are adopting children. These actualities combined, could offer an explanation as to why the majority of adoptive parents do not have biological children.

#### 4.3.2.2 Number of Children Adopted by each Participant

The participants were asked to indicate how many children they had adopted. The results are presented in Figure 4.8.



N=20

**Figure 4.8 Number of Children Adopted by Each Participant**

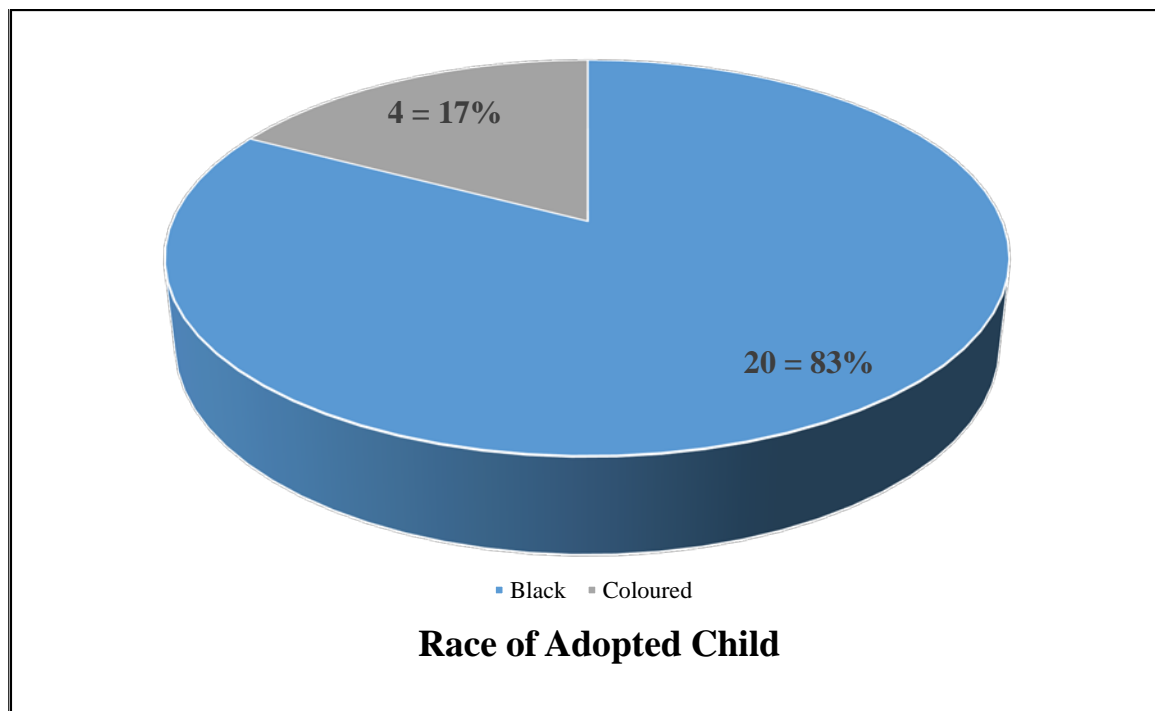
Figure 4.8 clearly indicates that the majority of the participants had adopted one child, while less than a quarter of the participants had adopted 2 children. A total of twenty-nine children were adopted by the participants. However, only twenty four of the twenty-nine adopted children could be considered for inclusion in the study. Five of the children did not meet the criteria due to them falling outside of the age category. However, they had siblings who did meet the criteria. When interviewing the participants, although the adoptive parents were made aware of the criteria, the researcher noted that they found it difficult to differentiate between the children who did and did not fit the criteria. When being interviewed, if more than one child

had been adopted, the adoptive parent would share experiences of the adoption process for all of their adopted children, regardless of age.

At the time of the interviews taking place, two of the married participants were in the process of adopting a second child. Half of the single participants had adopted more than one child, and 5 of the participants had biological and adopted children. The above findings have no pattern, which infers that the choice of how many children to have, whether biologically or by adoption, is ultimately a personal one. Factors such as employment, financial security, adjustment in life-style, relationship status, the fragility of relationships, current family dynamics and age, could play a role when making the choice to start a family or to increase the size of a family.

#### 4.3.2.3 Race of Adopted Children

The participants were asked to indicate the race of their adopted child/children. The results are presented in Figure 4.9.



N=24

**Figure 4.9 Race of Adopted Children**

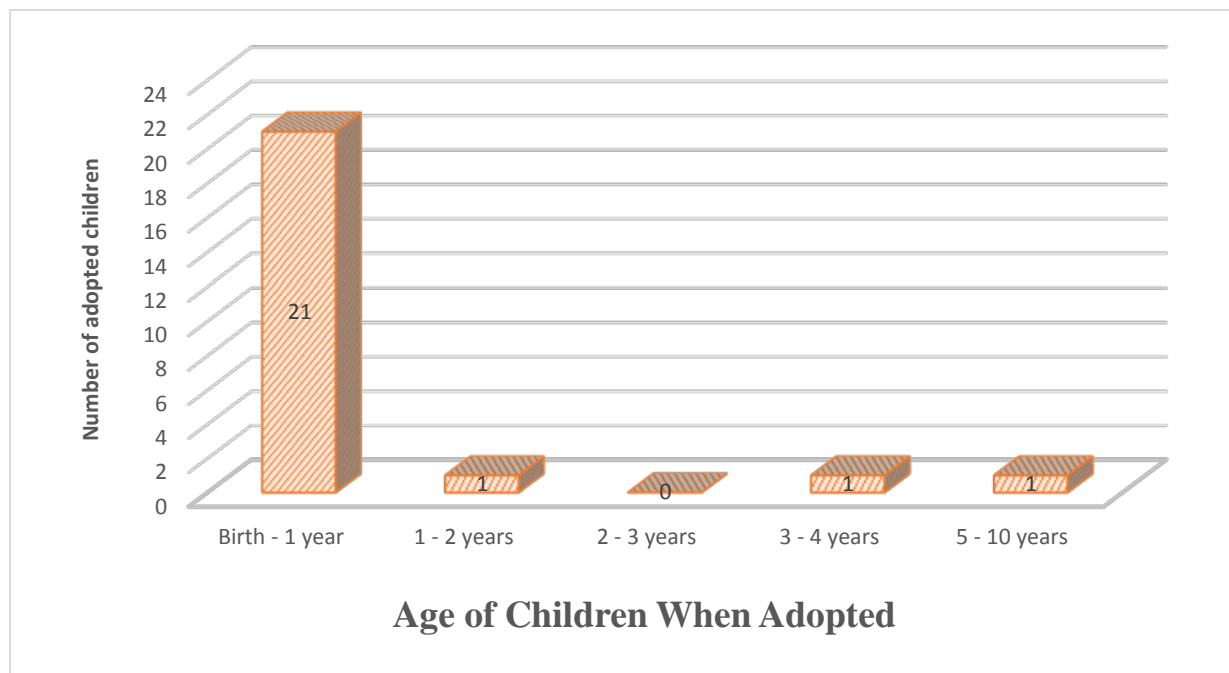
Figure 4.9 indicates that the majority of the adopted children were black, and less than a quarter of the children were coloured.



This finding that all the adopted children were not white, corresponds with Mokomane and Rochat's (2011) findings. The authors documented that although in terms of race, national adoptions in South Africa heavily favour white children, they are not readily available for adoption.

#### 4.3.2.4 Age of Child/Children When Adopted

The participants were asked to indicate the age of their child/children when they were adopted. The results are presented in Figure 4.10.



N=24

**Figure 4.10 Age of Child/Children When Adopted**

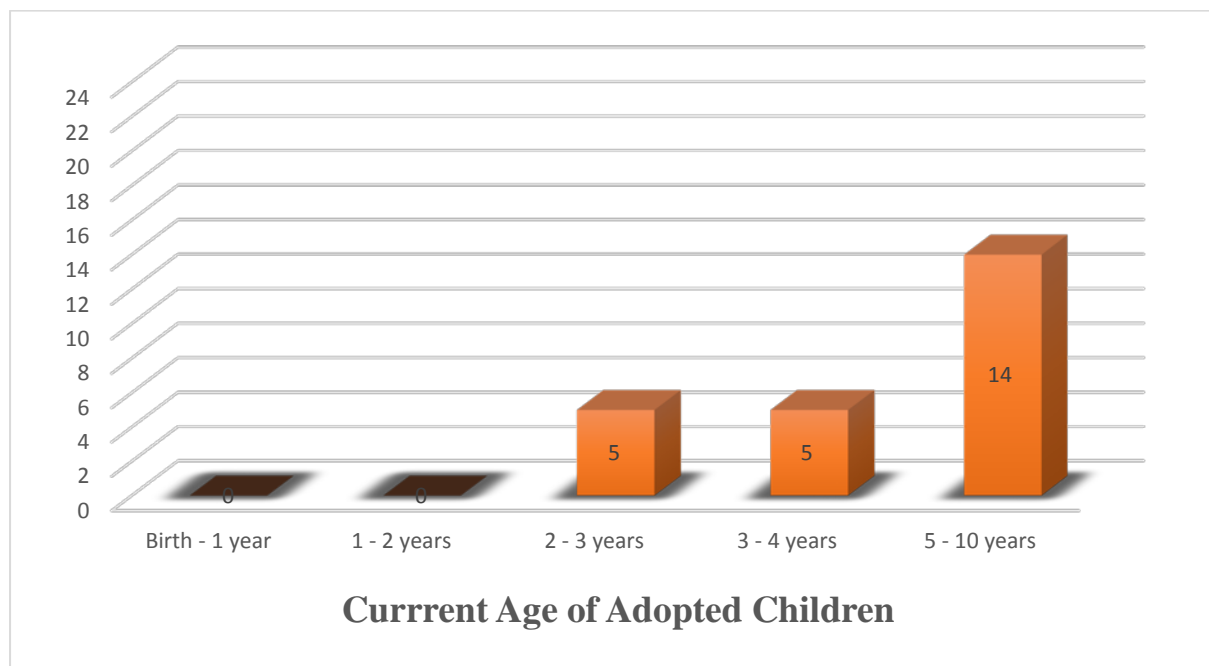
Figure 4.10 indicates that the majority of adopted children were between the ages of birth and one year old at the time of adoption. One child was between the ages of one and two years old; one child was between the ages of three and four years old, and one child was between the ages of five and ten years old at the time of adoption.

The above finding that the majority of children were adopted between the ages of birth and one year old, corresponds with that of Cowan, McRoy and Snowden *et al.* (cited by Mokamane & Rochat, 2011), who state that the likelihood of being adopted decreases with age. Explanations for this include that older children are less attractive to prospective adoptive families because of the increased risk of placement disruption, which has been well documented. Additionally,

the risk of developmental and attachment disorders increases with age. Children adopted as new-borns are perceived to have better outcomes in adolescence and adulthood (Cowan, cited by Mokomane & Rochat, 2011).

#### 4.3.2.5 Current Age of Adopted Children

The participants were asked to indicate the current age of their child/children. The results are presented in Figure 4.11.



N=24

**Figure 4.11 Current Age of Child/Children**

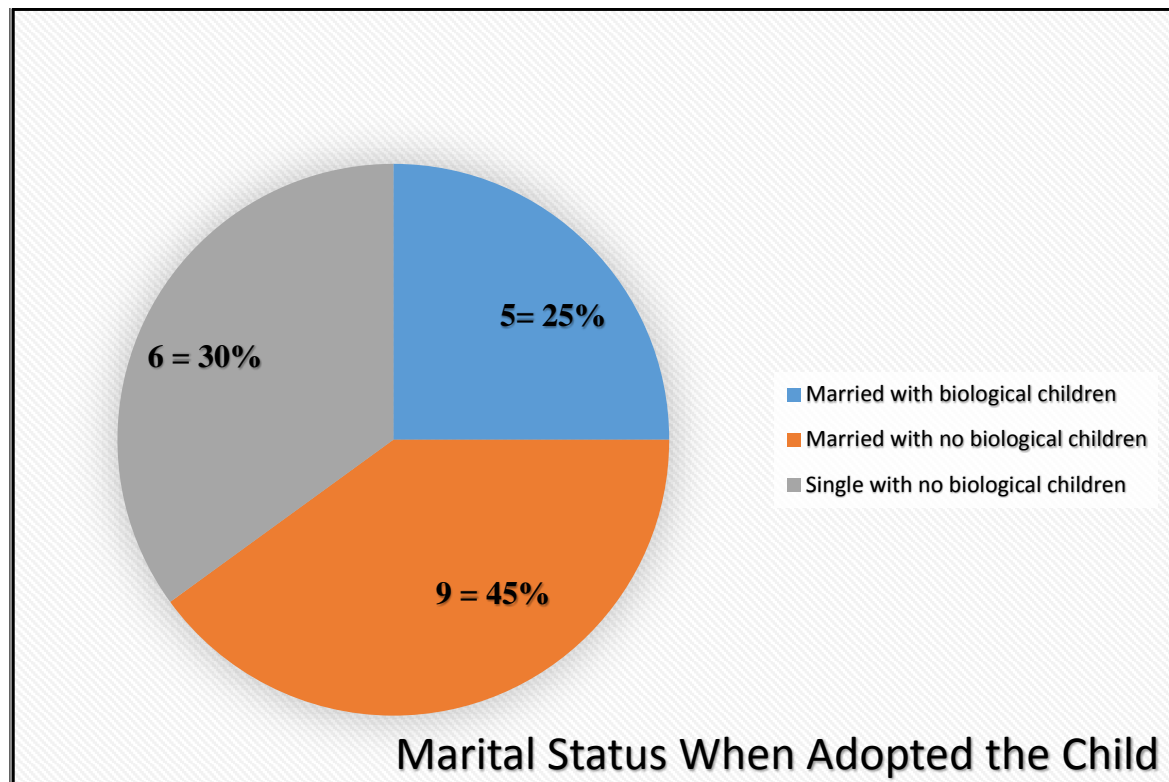
Figure 4.11 indicates that more than half of the children were five to ten years old; a quarter of the children were three to four years old, with the remaining quarter were two to three years old at the time that the data was collected. Due to the fact that the criteria for inclusion in the study specified that participants must be parents who have adopted a child transracially within the last ten years, it can be deduced that the majority of adoptees were under the age of one years old at the time of adoption. The above finding that the majority of children were under the age of one year old when adopted, is consistent with the literature by Cowan, McRoy and Snowden et al. (cited by Mokomane & Rochat, 2011) referred to in (4.3.5) Age of Child/Children When Adopted.

### 4.3.3 The Adoption Process

In terms of the adoption process, participants shared information regarding their marital status at the time of adoption, the type of adoption agency used, the length of time the adoption took, and the form of adoption chosen and to share their overall experience of the adoption process.

#### 4.3.3.1 Marital Status at Time of Adoption

The participants were asked to indicate what their marital status was when they adopted the child. The results are presented in Figure 4.12.



N=20

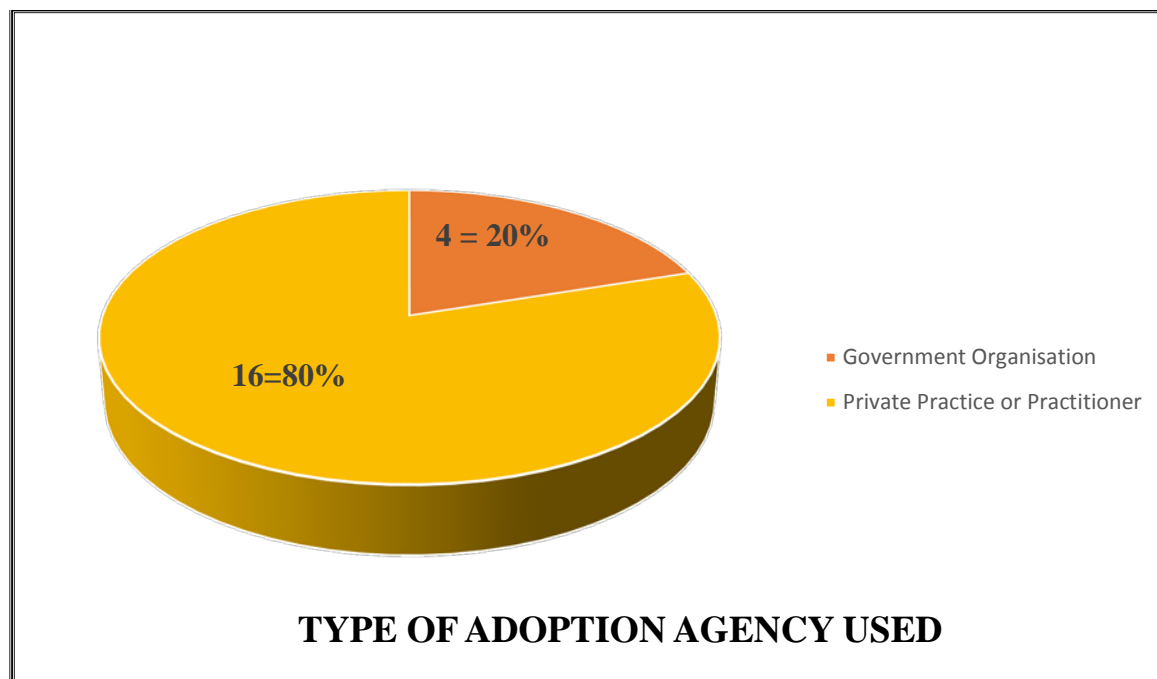
**Figure 4.12 Marital Status at Time of Adoption**

Figure 4.12 indicates that almost half of the participants were married with no biological children at the time of the adoption. Single parents with no biological children made up more than a quarter of the sample population, and lastly, married couples with biological children accounted for a quarter of the sample population.

These findings that the majority of participants were married with no biological children at the time of adoption, differ marginally to those of Mokomane & Rochat (2011), who found that the majority of adopters were single or unmarried. Kalule-Sabiti *et al.* and Hosegood *et al.* (cited by Mokomane & Rochat, 2011) attribute single motherhood among adult South African women and lowered marriage rates as factors influencing adoption patterns. The authors stated that socio-demographic data on adoptive parents' characteristics is deficient. During their research, the only two variables available, were race and marital status.

#### 4.3.3.2 Type of Adoption Agency Used

The participants were asked to indicate whether they used a private adoption agency or a government organisation. The results are presented in Figure 4.13.



N=20

**Figure 4.13 Type of Adoption Agency used**

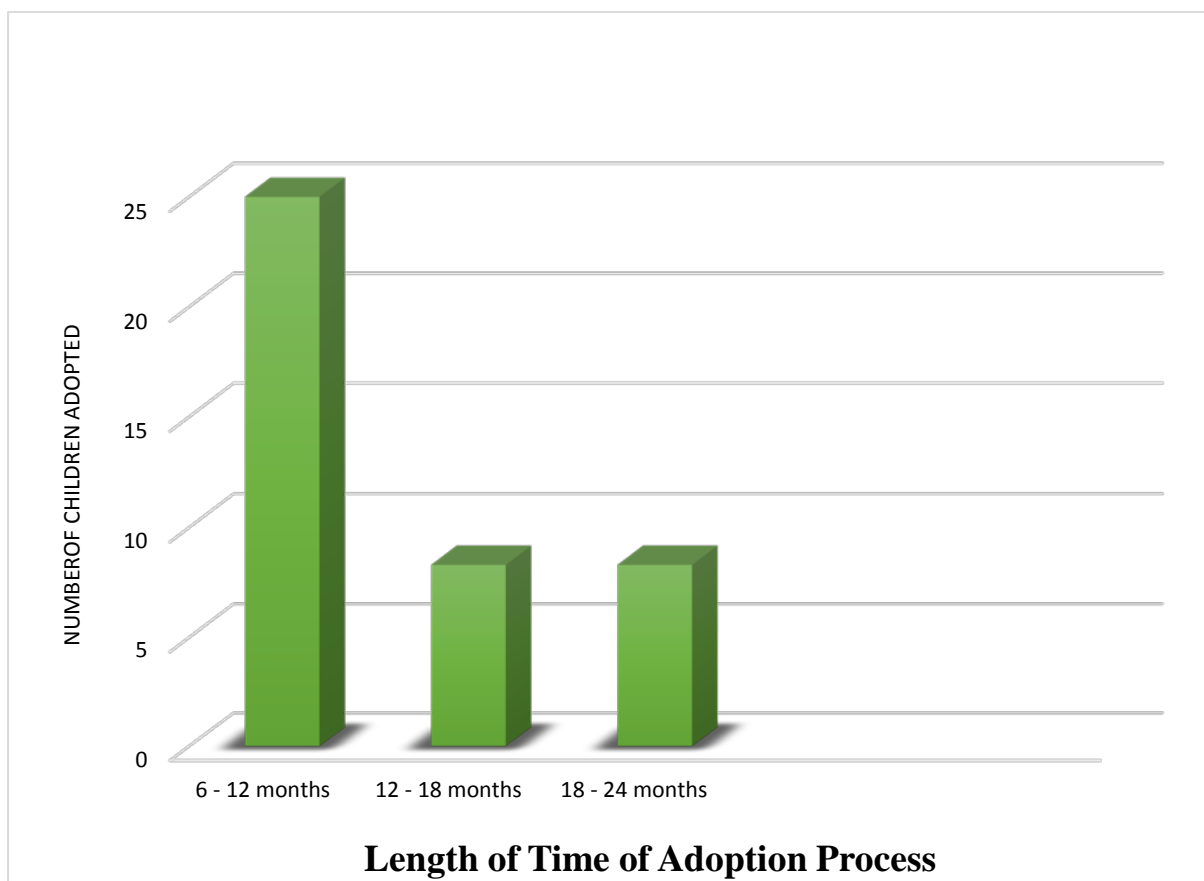
According to figure 4.13, the majority of participants chose to adopt through a private adoption agency, with less than a quarter of the participants opting to adopt through government organisations. Abrahams (2017) found that although prospective adoptive parents can take the routes of either private or public channels, private adoption specialists, although more expensive, appear to be more efficient compared to government agencies, which are despairingly understaffed. Private agencies are therefore able to offer a better service. The

findings that the majority of participants chose to utilize private adoption agencies is comprehensible. As prospective adoptive parents are uncertain of when the adoption will take place, often feelings of frustration and apprehension surface (Romanini, 2017:87). Competence on the part of the service provider is therefore essential to avoid further emotional turmoil.

Concerned about the decreasing levels of adoption in South Africa, the Department of Social Development have presented proposed amendments to the Children's Act (38 of 2005) to parliament, which will see state social workers providing adoption services at no cost to prospective adoptive parents. (Department of Social Development, 2013).

#### 4.3.3.3 Length of Time Adoption Took

The participants were asked to indicate how long the adoption process took in its entirety. The results are presented in Figure 4.14.



N=24

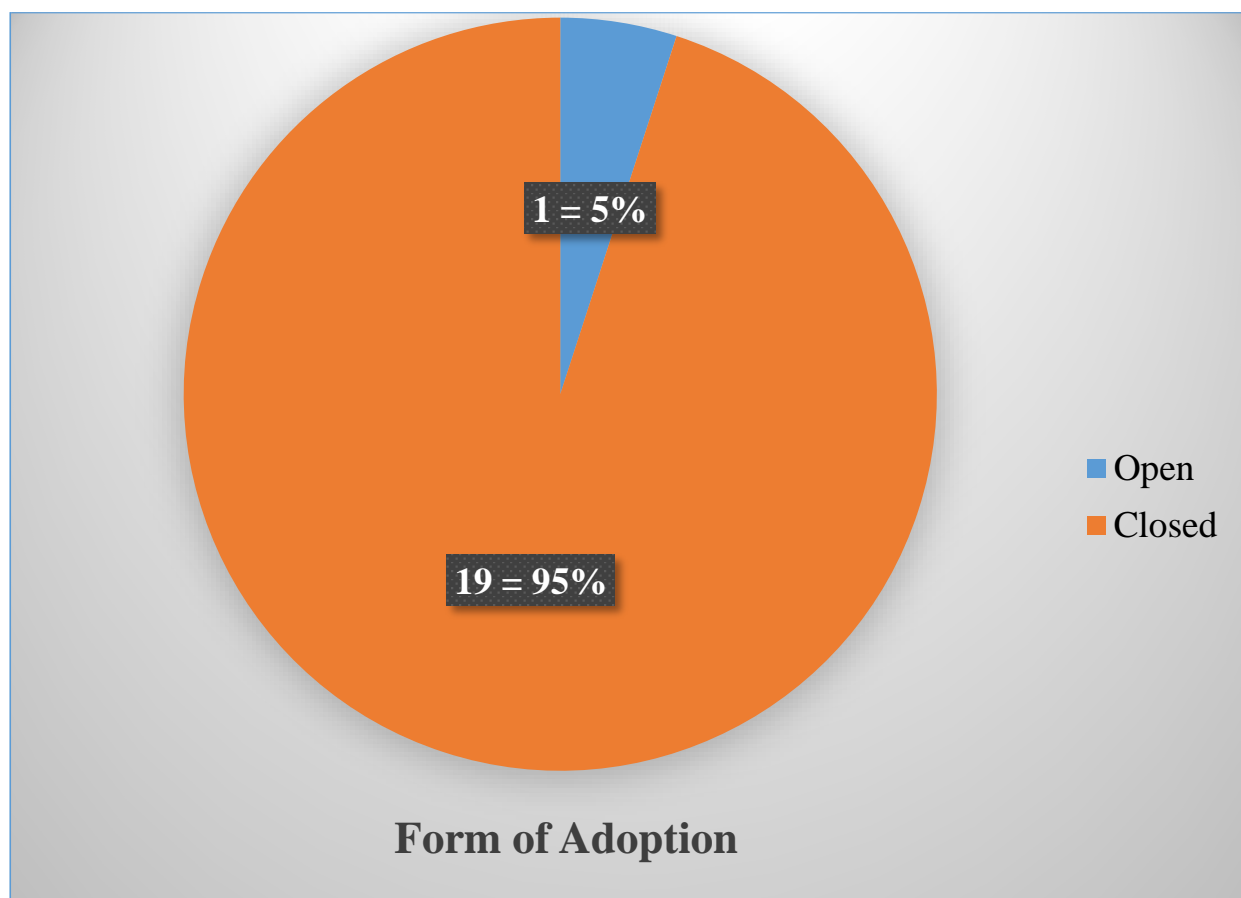
**Figure 4.14: Length of Time Adoption Process Took**

Figure 4.14 clearly indicates that the majority of the adoption processes had taken between 6 and 12 months. Two of participants had waited between 12 and 18 months and the remaining two participants had waited between 18 and 24 months for the entire process to be finalized.

The finding that the majority of participants had experienced the adoption process as taking between 6 and 12 months, relates to a statement made by the Department of Home Affairs, documented by Makinane & Mapumulo (2015:11). The statement claims that through amendments to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, the department is hoping to reduce the current waiting period for finalising adoptions to less than the six to twelve months, which is the amount of time the process currently takes. According to an article published in You Magazine entitled *Everything you need to know about adopting a child in SA* (2016), the screening process currently takes approximately six to nine months but depends on the individual case.

#### 4.3.3.4 Form of Adoption

The participants were asked to indicate whether the adoption of their children was open or closed. The results are presented in Figure 4.15.



N=20

**Figure 4.15: Form of Adoption**

Figure 4.15 signifies that only one of the participants opted for an open adoption as an adoption form. Although the participant had been present at the birth of her adopted child, the biological mother had not remained in contact with the adoptive family, despite effort made on the part of the adoptive parents. The remaining participants chose a closed adoption as an adoption form.

The finding that the majority of participants chose closed adoption as a form links with information provided by Child Protection Statistics (2016). Although no statistics on the form of adoptions chosen by South African adoptive parents could be found, child protection statistics in South Africa state that there are three million orphans. Furthermore, women in South Africa experience tens of thousands of crisis pregnancies annually. In many of these cases, the mothers are not able to raise their babies (Child Protection Statistics, 2016). From these statistics, it can be surmised that the majority of stranger adoptions (which relates to the practice where the adoptive parents were “strangers” to the child and to the birth parents) in South Africa are closed, as the biological parents are often deceased or, having abandoned their babies, are untraceable.

**4.3.3.5 Experiences of Adoption Process**

Participants were asked to describe their experiences of the adoption process. The results are provided in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Experiences of the Adoption Process**

<b>THEME: Experiences of the Adoption Process</b>	
<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>(a) Positive Experience</b>	(i) Adoption process uncomplicated
<b>b) Negative Experience</b>	(i) Incompetence of service providers

**Table 4.1: Experiences of Adoption Process****(a) Sub-theme: Positive Experience**

The first sub-theme which was identified within experiences of the adoption process, was that participants experienced the process as being positive. One category emerged from this sub-theme.

**(i) Category: *Adoption process was uncomplicated***

The first category to be identified was that the majority of the participants found the **adoption process to be uncomplicated**.

Table 4.1 indicates that the overall majority of participants described their overall experience of the adoption process as positive. Most of the participants used the terms, “quick, easy, straight- forward and simple”, when describing their experience.

Narratives supporting the positive experiences of participants are discussed below: “It was very, very easy. Very easy to follow, we had no issues.” (Participant W)

“We found it to be fairly straight-forward. We had no problems, except for the frustration of Home Affairs and the name change.” (Participant L3)

“I actually found it really easy...yeah, it was very personal actually.” (Participant C2)

Although most of the participants reported their experience as being positive, due to the question being open-ended, participants were able to reflect on the entirety of their experience of the adoption process. While these experiences did often make mention of negative occurrences, these did not alter the overall outcome of the experience being described as positive.

**(b) Sub-Theme: Negative Experience**

The second sub-theme which was identified within experiences of the adoption process, was that participants experienced the process as negative. Only three participants described their overall experience as negative. Two of the three participants who described their experience of the process as negative, had used child and family welfare non-government organisations in the process of adopting their child/children. One category emerged from this sub-theme.



**(i) Category: *Incompetence of service providers***

The only category to be identified was that participants found that **adoption service providers were incompetent**. Less than a quarter of the participants stated that they experienced the adoption organisation and/or the adoption social worker as being incompetent.

Narratives supporting these views are highlighted below:

“I think the organisation just didn’t want the transracial adoption, that was the impression I got all the time. But then when I got a different social worker that wasn’t Xhosa then they got a little bit more...but then they weren’t very good.” Participant (L2)

“And I was so frustrated by it all because it was letting so many kids down. The system is just so flawed. My daughter wasn’t even RACAP-ed. They don’t even put older children on RACAP anymore. They don’t even bother. So I get so frustrated.” (Participant D1)

The views that incompetent service on the part of the adoption service provider can impact negatively on adoptive parents, is also highlighted in the literature (Administrator, 2001). While some children’s activists have applauded the Department of Social Development’s application to see that state social workers are able to provide adoption services, declaring that it would allow those who could not previously adopt due to high costs, an opportunity to become adoptive parents, private adoption agencies and Members of Parliament have raised concerns about the state’s ability to deliver this service.

In this regard, Wolfson-Vorster (2015) states that the proposed amendment to the Children’s Act seems minor on the surface, but if promulgated, could expand the definition of an adoption social worker to include every social worker employed by the Department of Social Development, regardless of their experience in the field, or the nature of their employment contract with the Department. The author adds that although extending the definition to include department social workers makes sense, accreditation which is necessary for adoption social workers in private practice, will not be a requirement for the department’s employees. Therefore, the risks of inexperienced and unskilled social workers managing adoptions is a concern which outweighs the benefits of making adoptions available to more people.

The harm which can potentially be caused by an adoption social worker not being skilled is evident in the following narratives by two participants:

“I mean, our social worker, she did the administration in the end because she had to. But there was stuff like applying for clearance from the sexual offender’s registry. She didn’t even apply for that.” (Participant D1)

“They changed social workers three times and at the end of it they came back to me and they said “we’ve really messed up your process, we think you should go private.” (Participant L2)

The above finding is clearly relevant to prospective adoptive parents’ experience of the adoption process being positive. Should inexperienced and unskilled social workers be granted the responsibility of processing adoptions, this could potentially result in many failed adoptions, thereby emotionally affecting thousands of potential families in South Africa.

#### **4.3.4 Challenges Experienced Regarding Transracial Adoption**

This section aims to explore the challenges experienced by parents regarding transracial adoption, from the perspective of the study participants. Participants were asked to discuss how the adoption impacted on their relationship with their spouse, how family members reacted to the adoption, how they experienced attachment, and how siblings bonded with the adopted child? Responses to these questions and related aspects, will be discussed in this section.

##### ***4.3.4.1 Challenges experienced with immediate relationships***

Participants were asked to describe their experiences within their immediate relationships. The four sub-themes and six relevant categories that emerged within this theme are highlighted in table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Challenges experienced with immediate relationships**

<b>THEME: Challenges experienced with immediate relationships</b>	
<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>(a) Spouse</b>  Spousal relationships were not affected	(i) Consensus needed between partners prior to adoption
	(ii) Post adoption spousal problems related to becoming first time parents
<b>(b) Immediate family</b>  Responses of family were varied	(i) Family members took time to adjust to adoption
	(ii) Family members were supportive, accepting and positive
<b>(c) Attachment</b>  Attachment to adopted child was easy	(i) Parents bonded without delay
	(ii) Anxious about bonding
	(iii) Mindful about attachment
<b>(d) Siblings</b>  Immediate acceptance of adopted child by siblings	(i) Early bonding

**(a) Sub-theme: Spousal relationships were not affected**

The first sub-theme which was identified, explores spousal relationships, as a possible challenge experienced by transracial adoptive parents. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category:** *Consensus needed between partners prior to adoption*

The first category to be identified was that **consensus between both partners needed to be reached** prior to adoption. All participants who were in a relationship, stated that as a couple, both parties needed to be in agreement with regards to the decision to adopt.

Narratives supporting this view are indicated below:

“My spouse was completely on board. We have a passion to adopt first and foremost, and then secondly, race was a secondary issue.” (Participant C1)

“I don’t think adoption affected our relationship. I think the way in which the infertility... the infertility affected our relationship. I don’t think the adoption necessarily affected our relationship. It was something we both wanted.” (Participant D2)

“I said to him, I want to adopt. So that was before we were even seriously dating, that was out there. And he said to me, no, that’s what I’ve always wanted as well.” (Participant A2)

It is clear that all participants who were in a relationship, stated that as a couple, both parties needed to be in agreement with regards to the decision to adopt their child/children. A few of the participants mentioned that their spouses took time to adjust to the idea of adopting a child. This process could not be hurried, as the participants needed their partners to be on the same page as them. This finding that there should be consensus between partners to adopt a transracial child corresponds with literature. Robyn Wolfson Vorster (2014) claims that in situations where the adopting parents are a couple (regardless of marital status), that the decision to adopt takes two “yeses”. Most adoptive children have already been rejected and further rejection from one parent could have far reaching consequences for the child and would certainly not be in their best interest. On the other hand, Wolfson Vorster (2014) describes marriages which fall apart due to one partner making the decision to adopt, which the other partner cannot or will not support, tragic.

**(ii) Category:** *Post adoption spousal challenges related to becoming first time parents*

The second category to be identified in this sub-theme, was that post adoption spousal challenges were not related to adoption. A small number of participants pointed out that post adoption spousal challenges experienced, were due to becoming new parents, and not specifically related to the adoption.

Narratives to support this view are:

“We had quite a lot of challenges. I don’t think it was because it’s a child that was adopted, it was just our first child”. (Participant S2)

“I have a phenomenal husband, but it was a lot of stress. Because we were so hard on ourselves as well, we didn’t know if we were getting it right, and I was so worried of not spending enough time with my daughter ... and all this unnecessary pressure that we put on ourselves”. (Participant D1)

“We had a few problems when our daughter was adopted. We were always at each other, and I thought, here I am with a new baby, where is the support? But we’re fine now.” (Participant A1)

From the above narratives it is clear that participants did not experience spousal relationships as being affected by the adoption, but rather with the adaption of becoming a new parent. These findings are consistent with those of Ward (1998), who states that adoptive families have many experiences in common with biological parents, regardless of the age of the adoptive child. A new child, especially an infant, can disrupt the parameters of a family.

Carter & McGoldrick (cited by Ward, 1998), add that the marital partnership needs to be increased to incorporate the nurturing of the child. An infant disrupts the time dimension of the family as he or she does not fit into the existing schedule. The physical needs of a baby demand adjustment of the home environment and arrangements for chores needed to maintain that environment (La Rossa, cited by Ward, 1998). The transition to parenthood which is often anticipated with elation, can induce feelings of anxiety.

The relationship between adoptive parents forms part of the microsystem of the ecological perspective, which is the smallest and most direct system experienced by people. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:39). Although spousal relationships could be perceived as being a challenge when adopting a child, participants in this study group reported experiencing the same challenges parents who had borne biological children would have experienced, with regards to becoming first time parents.

#### **(b) Sub-theme: Responses of family were varied**

The second sub-theme which was identified, was that immediate family members had varying responses to the transracial adoption, which was experienced as a challenge by participants. Two categories emerged from this sub-theme, which will be discussed.

##### **(i) Category: *Family members took time to adjust to adoption***

The first category that emerged was that almost half of the participants stated that **family members took time to adjust** to the idea of transracial adoption, but thereafter, were accepting, positive and supportive.

The following narratives showcase the views of participants as it relates to the category:

“They were supportive and certainly not anti our choice, but I think more hesitant and concerned, rather than anti at all.” (Participant C1)

I know my mom-in-law had reservations to start with, but she never communicated those to us and I learned through other people, and now her and that child are like instant love at first sight.” (Participant J1)

“Because my Dad, when he was alive, felt that I would be looked on with shame because I’m single, but you know they are very old school Italian people. For a year they basically didn’t have any contact with us, but then that Christmas my Dad said, I bought your daughter a present. Suddenly I was invited to Christmas and after that they both fell in love with her. (Participant L2)

The above finding that participants experienced family members as being hesitant and concerned when being told about the transracial adoption, being accepting of the child post adoption, corresponds with findings by Findlay (2006), who reported that adoptive parents faced the most resistance from their parents. Furthermore, Attwell (2004) reported that adoptive parents were met with apprehension by some family members. Romanini (2017:89) found that despite the reluctance that was experienced from some family members pre-adoption, negative reactions to the transracial adoption resolved over time and the adopted child was accepted by all family members who had initially voiced concerns.

Grandparents of transracially adopted children will have lived through the apartheid era in South Africa, when transracial adoption was prohibited by acts including the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act (Findlay, 2006). Being obliged to change their way of thinking, and concern for the stigma which could be associated with transracial adoption, could account for the hesitancy of some family members.

**(ii) Category:** *Family members were supportive, accepting and positive*

The second category that surfaced, was that half of the participants experienced family members to be supportive, accepting and positive regarding the transracial adoption, from the outset.

The narratives below express this:

“Incredibly supportive. Always have been. I mean we’re a very close family and they’ve always been supportive of me and they adore her.” (Participant M)

“Everybody embraced the decision and love her to bits.” (Participant D2)

The narratives above highlight that family members were supportive of the decision by the adoptive parent/s to adopt transracially. This finding that participants felt supported by their families, corresponds with both Atwell (2004) and Romanini (2017:65), who found that adoptive parents consulted their family members once they had made the decision to adopt. Although seeking approval and support, they reported that they would have gone ahead with their decision to adopt regardless of approval of family members. Nevertheless, participants felt a sense of relief by having family member's approval and highlighted the importance of having support from relatives closest to them.

**(c) Sub-theme: Attachment to adopted child was easy**

The third sub-theme that came to the fore was that participants immediately attached to the adopted child and that attachment was not seen as a challenge. Three categories are identified below.

**(i) Category: *Parents bonded without delay***

The first category that emerged, was that the overall majority of participants experienced **immediate attachment** to the adopted child.

This is evident in the following narratives:

"It was immediate really. I think 'cos I have such a strong maternal feeling". (Participant N2)

"I didn't want to get attached so quickly in case something didn't work out. It was instant for me and she fell for him." (Participant W)

No, I was worried that it would be difficult. The attachment was fairly immediate and strong, but there was always a fear". (Participant S1)

These views support the finding that the participants bonded with the child easily and quickly. Goldberg, Moyer and Kinkler (2013), whose study focused on adoption in general (and not specifically on transracial adoption), obtained similar findings and reported that more than half of the participants mentioned an immediate and strong bond with their adopted child.

**(ii) Category: *Anxious about bonding***

The second category that emerged, was that more than a quarter of participants experienced **feeling anxious** about bonding prior to adoption.

The narratives below support this view:

“My friend, D, who has adopted, told me not to overthink the adoption/attachment thing. I mean, I felt that if...with a little baby, like I was quite anxious”. (Participant C2)

“I was a bit nervous. I was very aware that attachment had to happen”. (Participant J2)

Participants stated that prior to the adoption, they had felt anxious about the possibility that they might fail to bond with their adopted child and that it could be a challenge. However, all participants related that they bonded easily once they took their adopted child home. The finding that participants were anxious about bonding with their child, corresponds with both Ashley (2012) and Romanini (2017:66) who found that couples experienced anxiety about whether or not they would bond with their child.

### (iii) **Category:** *Mindful about attachment*

The third category that emerged, was that participants were **mindful about attachment**. A significant number of participants experienced being very conscious and deliberate with regards to attachment.

This is highlighted in the following narratives:

“So, for us the attachment was about 2 weeks of just intense skin on skin bonding, making sure we were the primary people doing the feeding and the caring”. (Participant A2)

“We were very intentional with making sure that we bonded. So we had like 2 weeks where we didn’t go out at all and for a month nobody else met her basic needs”. (Participant S2)

A significant number of participants were aware of attachment being a possible challenge, and took conscious steps in an attempt to prevent this from happening. Participants reported being mindful about attachment, ensuring that they, as adoptive parent/s were the only caregivers and did not allow visits from friends or family until attachment had taken place. Intense therapeutic parenting such as this, is known as cocooning. According to Zordich (2012), cocooning is one of the most important factors to consider when developing a secure, trusting, strong relationship between the adoptive parent and the newly adopted child. It assists the parent in becoming familiar with the new child, the child’s temperament, abilities and challenges. Cocooning helps parents provide a safe haven for their new child.



**(d) Sub-theme: Immediate acceptance of adopted child by siblings**

The fourth and final sub-theme that presented, was that of siblings accepting the adopted child immediately. One category was identified below

**(i) Category: *Early bonding***

The first category that emerged from this sub-theme was that the overall majority of adoptees who had siblings at the time of adoption, were welcomed into the family by their siblings, and the children **bonded easily**.

The following narratives support this view:

“The first day he was sitting and feeding her a bottle. And these are photos that they cherish the most - is the photo of him feeding her her first bottle. And then my middle son was lying in the cot with her” (Participant L3)

“So, I think we had spoken a lot about it before so that by the time she came home, even though it wasn’t years that we were waiting, it was something that was already like in her mind, she knew what was...you know, we’d spoken about it and what was going to happen, and she’s just...they’re amazing. They love one another and...yeah.” (Participant L1)

The above finding that siblings bonded easily with the adopted child, indicates that the majority of siblings were immediately accepting of their newly adopted brother or sister. Conversely, Beauvais (2013) points out that one third of children adjust well to the arrival of a newly adopted sibling, one third have adjustment issues but eventually transition well, and one third of children have more serious emotional and behavioural problems.

Furthermore, adoptive parents cannot ever be fully prepared for the unknown, so it is unrealistic to expect that they can fully prepare their other children for the arrival and transition of a new adopted sibling. A possibility for the reason that the siblings in the study were accepting of their adopted siblings, is that their parents had sufficiently prepared them emotionally for the arrival of their adopted sibling.

**4.3.4.2 Challenges experienced when faced with systems outside of the family**

Participants were asked to describe their experiences of challenges faced with systems outside of the family. The five sub-themes and nine relevant categories that emerged within this theme are highlighted in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Experiences of interaction with systems outside of the family**

<b>THEME: Experiences of participants regarding challenges with systems outside of the family</b>	
<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>(a) Workplace</b>  Colleagues and associates were supportive	(i) Work colleagues and associates expressed support, acceptance and positivity
	(ii) Colleagues and associates in the work place were interested and questioning
	(iii) Employers were accommodating
<b>(b) Schools</b>  Aware of racial diversity as a challenge	(i) Satisfied with racial diversity in schools
	(ii) Lack of racial diversity in schools
<b>(c) Biological family</b>  Lack of contact with biological family	(i) Yearned for contact with child's biological parents
	(ii) No contact with biological parents
<b>(d) Friends of children</b>  Absence of racial prejudice	(i) Friends were racially diverse
<b>(e) Church</b>  Varying reaction of congregation	(i) Degree of acceptance varied

**(a) Sub-theme: Workplace: Colleagues and associates were supportive**

The first sub-theme which was identified was that colleagues and associates were supportive towards the transracial adoption. Three categories emerged out of this sub-theme:

**(i) Category: *Work colleagues expressed support, acceptance and positivity***

The first category that surfaced, was that the majority of participants found that **work colleagues were supportive**, accepting and positive regarding the impending transracial adoption of their child.

This is reflected in the following narratives:

“I’ve got such a support system. I mean they’re like a second family here, so everybody was all very, very supportive.” (Participant D1)

“I’ve got a few photographs of her when I was on maternity leave. I was at the school twice a week just checking up on things. She’s sleeping on my colleague’s shoulders ... and there’s L, the catering manager at school, is their other mother, she’s fantastic.” (Participant L)

The above narratives clearly indicate that work colleagues were supportive towards the adoptive parents. This finding corresponds with Findlay’s (2006) view that in most instances, adoptive parents found that work colleagues were as supportive as friends were.

**(ii) Category: *Colleagues and associates in the work place were interested and questioning***

The second category to be identified was that colleagues and associates in the workplace were **interested and questioning**. A quarter of the participants reported that their colleagues and associates were curious about the transracial adoption.

The following narratives support this view:

“Again, mostly positive and if not positive then genuine interested questioning rather than anything negative.” (Participant C1)

“I was running a social skills group for children with learning challenges and so...they were like I don’t understand how you’re becoming a Mom when you don’t look pregnant. And so, we spoke about adoption and some of the myths around adoption and so that I suppose was the biggest impact on my work space. It has opened up spaces for me to work with other children around how we navigate this.” (Participant A2)

Although participants in the study conveyed that colleagues were interested and questioning regarding the transracial adoption, the researcher could find no literature on this topic. It can, however, be presumed that colleague's responses to the transracial adoption would be linked to the closeness of the relationship between each colleague and the adoptive parent/s; whether the colleagues were discriminatory or not, and the race and age of the colleagues. In this regard, a South African study carried out by Tanga & Nyasha (2017), found that white participants were more likely to support the practice of transracial adoption than participants of other races. However, research by Moos & Mwaba (2007) found that the majority of black undergraduate students approved of transracial adoption and believed that it promoted racial tolerance. These findings could suggest that educated black South African youth who will be entering the workforce in the near future, support a racially inclusive nation and are therefore supportive of transracial adoption.

**(iii) Category: *Employers were accommodating***

The third category and final category that emerged in this sub-theme, was that **employers were accommodating**. The majority of participants who were employed, experienced employers as being accommodating towards the transracial adoption.

The narratives below support this view:

"They were very supportive. I said to them that I'm not going to be able to drive through all the time so they were flexible in allowing me to work two full days and one half day."  
(Participant J2)

"They were fantastic. They gave me this kind of maternity leave that they give to everyone else, so there was no issue with taking those four months paid maternity, and then I could take ... you can take up to a year but the rest will be unpaid, and that was our standard policy."  
(Participant H)

"She looked at me (referring to her employer) and said both my children are adopted. I know exactly what you're going through." (Participant N1)

The above findings that participants experienced employers as being accommodating regarding the fact that they had become transracial adoptive parents, indicates that employers were empathic and supportive. However, although the majority of participants in the study relayed that they were offered the same benefits by employers as biological parents were, this practice was not standard in the workplace. Findlay's (2006) South African study found that some

participants were offered maternity leave, whereas others weren't. This caused certain adoptive parents to feel that their role as a parent was not wholly accepted by their employer and was indicative of discrimination against the adoptive family. Melina (2002:17) states that adoptive parents are sensitive to any situation which implies discrimination. The author states that, "adoptive parents are usually sensitive to any remark or implication that calls into question their authenticity as a family".

Fortuitously, in November 2017, an unprecedented change in leave relating to the birth of an adopted child, took place. African Christian Democratic Party MP Cheryllyn Dudley made history for successfully piloting a Bill that provides clarity on leave for employees who adopt young children. Previously, adoptive parents were required to take either family responsibility or annual leave. The Bill amends the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and the Unemployment Insurance Act, corrects dated references to The Act, and provides for the application for benefits and the payment thereof.

#### **(b) Sub-theme: Schools: Aware of racial diversity as a challenge**

The second sub-theme which was identified was that adoptive parents experienced mindfulness regarding racial diversity, in their interaction with schools. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

##### **(i) Category: *Racial diversity in schools is satisfactory***

The first category that emerged, was that participants expressed **being satisfied with the racial diversity** at the school their child attended. The majority of participants whose children were enrolled at a school, reported being satisfied with the fact that that diverse races were represented at the school their child/children attended.

The following narratives highlight the views of participants as it relates to the category:

"So, all of those places (referring to different schools) are racially mixed, everybody's got different circumstances, it's not posh so it's not all the white kids." (Participant M)

"It turns out it's very diverse. It's turned out to be a real win." (Participant J3)

These views show that participants were satisfied with racial diversity at the school their adopted child/children attended and that it was not a challenging aspect. In a study carried out in the United States of America, Morrison (2004:197) found that 90% of participants lived in

an area where their children went to school with other children of the same race. Participants reported actively attempting to connect the child to their racial community.

It can be deduced from the above, that parents who were satisfied with the racial diversity in schools, either sought out a racially diverse school in which to enrol their children, or alternatively, lived in an area where a racially diverse school was within the boundaries of their community.

**(ii) Category:** *Lack of racial diversity in schools*

Lack of racial diversity in schools was the second category to be identified. Participants stated that they saw the **lack of racial diversity** at the school their child attended as a challenge.

The following narratives showcase the views of participants as it relates to the category:

“But the biggest problem we saw was that being the only child of colour was a problem.”  
(Participant D2)

“We are probably changing him to another school next year, now that we know we’re staying for another year. Purely because of the racial demographics.” (Participant J2)

The above narratives indicate that participants were concerned about lack of diversity in schools and that this aspect was challenging. In this regard, Lemmer & Meier (2011) state that although various policies and legislations have created an environment for the recognition of diversity in South African schools, it would be naïve to accept that official policies can produce an education system that, “automatically guarantees equal educational opportunities; the elimination of discriminatory practices; and the recognition of the rightful existence of diverse language, cultural, religious and gender interest groups”. The authors add that problems are experienced at grassroots level in schools and classrooms with the implementation of legislation and the management of diversity. In short, the authors state that learner diversity will always be a characteristic of education that needs to be addressed.

It can be concluded that diversity in schools is a problem which is not going to be solved in the near future. By wanting their children to be exposed to a more racially inclusive educational environment, adoptive parents would have to enrol their children in schools which are not in their immediate community. This would cause an additional challenge, as parents want their children to be integrated into the community as well as at school. How to achieve both, is most certainly a challenge for transracial adoptive parents.

**(c) Sub-theme: Biological family: Lack of contact**

The third sub-theme which was identified was that adoptive parents experienced lack of contact with the biological parents as a challenge. Two categories emerged from this sub-theme.

**(i) Category: *Yearned for contact with child's biological family***

The first category which was identified was that participants admitted to **yearning for contact with their child's biological parents** and continuing to send regular correspondence, even though they received no response.

This is reflected in the following narratives:

“And the hardest part of the way this is structured, is that we don't get information back. ‘Cos it's sending stuff into the abyss. It's like writing in a diary as a teenage girl and no-one acknowledging.” (Participant A2)

“I e-mailed asking, how do I get this to her? Can we get this to her? What should I do?” (Participant D2)

The narratives above clearly indicate that participants longed for contact with their adopted child's biological family. This finding corroborates with research carried out by Park (2012:490), who states that adoptive parent's empathy and grief expand to other significant people in the child's pre-adoption period. Imagining part of that child's life in which they had no part, can generate strong emotions.

Sugeno's (n.d.) findings were comparable. The author found that for adoptive parents, there is a heart-rending truth: for the life with their child to begin, the child's life as they knew it up to that point, had to end. When a biological mother places her child up for adoption, especially during the first few years of childhood, the attachment process is suddenly and unexpectedly disrupted. Overwhelmed and helpless, attachment wounds and trauma often develop which can be difficult to repair. Trauma (in the cases of the child and biological parents), and secondary trauma (in the case of the adoptive parents), can be experienced by all members of the adoption triad.

Having the opportunity to become adoptive parents to a child, awakens a deep empathy for the biological parents, who have subsequently “lost” that child. This could explain the need for adoptive parents wanting to reach out, rather than being required to do so by the adoption organisation.

One participant explained the above as follows:

“I just can’t imagine making that decision to hand your child over. And I just wanted, I send photos so that if she makes contact that she has something to say she’s been okay.” (crying). (Participant H)

**(ii) Category: *No contact with biological family***

No contact with the biological family was the second category identified. Less than half of the participants revealed that they had **no contact with their child’s biological family**.

This is evident in the following narratives:

“No. No contact at all. I mean, that’s a closed adoption.” (Participant L3)

“No, no contact whatsoever. Then the social worker said that the mother didn’t want to see her at all, the mother didn’t want anything to do with it.” (Participant L2)

The above views of participants indicate that participants had no contact with their child’s biological family. A closed adoption entails no contact at all between the adoptive parents and the birthparents after the adoption takes place. By contrast, all the parties to an open adoption meet and remain in each other’s lives. In this regard, the researcher noted that although almost half of the participants said they had no contact with the biological family, the vast majority of participants had claimed that their adoptions were closed, with only one participant saying that the adoption of her child was an open adoption. This implies that participants could be confused regarding what form of adoption had taken place and thus had expectations that could not be fulfilled.

According to the American Pregnancy Association (2017), a semi-open adoption occurs when the potential birth mother or birth families experience non-identifying interaction with the adoptive families. In the South African context, Gift ov Life (2015) describe semi-open adoption as a combination of open and closed adoption where the birth parents have rights over where the child is placed and will maintain some level of contact with the adoptive parents, usually in the way of letters and photos. Interaction is facilitated by a third party which is usually the adoption organisation or attorney. However, in semi-open adoptions, the discretion of the adoptive parents takes precedence.

Due to the fact that the majority of participants did share non-identifying details with the biological parents, would imply that the majority of adoptions were semi-open, and not closed, as stated by the participants. In this regard, Siegel (2003:416) points out that open adoption is



not an easily defined concept. There are different options between adoptive parents and differing views between people who write about the phenomenon. Siegel (2003:43) therefore describes open adoptions as existing along a continuum. Open adoptions can comprise of minimal disclosure of identifying information through a third party (usually the adoption organisation), to full disclosure of all identifying information as well as on-going face to face contact between the adoptive and biological families.

Siegel (2003:416) further indicates that it is the social worker's responsibility to facilitate openness in adoptions in the form of a post adoption agreement. This would ensure that each adoption case's unique needs are met, and that adoptive parents are well-informed regarding the form of adoption assigned to their particular case. The Children's Act (2005:200) makes provision for a post- adoption agreement to be facilitated by social workers.

As signing a post-adoption agreement is a crucial part of the adoption administration process, it can be assumed that all the participants did sign one. However, their confusion as to the form of adoption agreed upon by the biological parents and themselves, suggests that information was either not made clear to them by the facilitating adoption social worker, or it was information which the participants did not assimilate.

#### **(d) Sub-theme: Friends: Absence of Racial Prejudice**

The fourth sub-theme which was identified was that adopted children's friends were accepting of them, without racial prejudice. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

##### **i) Category: *Friends were racially diverse***

The first category which was identified in this sub-theme, as that participants' children had **racially diverse friends**. More than half the participants stated that their children had friends of various races.

The following narratives serve as evidence for this category:

"Very mixed. That's due to the school. Coloured, white, black ... all that. It's about if she gets on with a child and I get on with the parents." (Participant M)

"Quite a mix. He has two best little friends, one is a coloured child, one is a white child." (Participant N)

The above views indicate that more than half of the participants reported their adopted children to have racially diverse friends. Although research can be found on the response and supportiveness of adoptive parents' friends, the researcher could not find any literature on the diversity of transracially adopted children's friends. However, it can be presumed that the racial diversity of the children's friends would be linked to how racially diverse their school was, and whether their adoptive parents socialised with people of other races.

**(e) Sub-theme: Church: Varying reaction of congregation**

Participants were asked to remark on any other system outside of the family, which they regarded as presenting a challenge. The fifth and final sub-theme which emerged from this enquiry, was that church formed part of the system outside of the family. While some participants found this system challenging, others did not. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category: *Degree of acceptance varied***

The only category to be identified in this sub-theme was that participants experienced **varying degrees of acceptance** and sense of acceptance by the church.

This brought to light the following narratives:

“Church-wise it was an interesting challenge. We attend a church and there are there are still some families there who are quite entrenched, sort of old-school people, and I wasn't sure what sort of reaction we were going to get.” (Participant C1).

“So, I was at the church office where I thought I would be safe and I was not and a lady walked in and said, her first words, I'm standing with both kids, her first words to me...Was that baby adopted? - but like very aggressive...” (Participant L1)

“Our own congregation was fantastic, my family didn't do a baby shower for me for either of them, not even my sister...I think they felt it's not necessary somehow, I don't know. My church threw me the most spectacular baby shower, with total strangers, some of them.” (Participant L2)

The above narratives indicate that almost half of the participants experienced varying responses by church community members, to the transracial adoption of their children. This finding has not been revealed in the literature studied for the purpose of this research. One of the descriptions of a community, given by Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005:292)

defines it as, “A group of people who share the same religion, race, job etc.” In the researcher’s view, although people may belong to the same religious group due to a belief, does not necessarily mean that they share the same views regarding other aspects. This is well-defined in the above narratives, where various people belonging to the same church community, have differing views regarding transracial adoption. It is noteworthy, that participants felt safe in the church environment, and were therefore shaken by the negative response of certain church community members.

It can be concluded that church community members who disapproved of transracial adoption, may have been of the older generation who had lived through apartheid in South Africa. During the apartheid years, laws were made, which forced different racial groups to live and develop separately. Additionally, marriages across the colour line and social integration between racial groups was forbidden. (A history of Apartheid in South Africa, n.d.) Many older, white South Africans who grew up during the apartheid years may have been unable to make the mind-shift to democracy where all races are regarded as equal, hence their reluctance to accept people of other races.

#### ***4.3.4.3 Challenges experienced with support systems***

Participants were asked to describe their experiences of interaction with support systems. The five sub-themes and five related categories that emerged within this theme are highlighted in table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Experiences of participants regarding challenges with support services**

<b>THEME: Experiences of participants regarding challenges with support services</b>	
<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>(a) Pre-adoption services adequate</b>  Satisfied with pre-adoption services	(i) Preparation was good
<b>(b) Pre-adoption services inadequate</b>  Pre-adoption services not offered	(i) Lack of pre-adoption services
<b>(c) Post-adoption services adequate</b>  Satisfied with post-adoption services	(i) Support was offered
<b>(d) Post-adoption services inadequate</b>  Post adoption services not offered	(i) Lack of post-adoption services
<b>(e) Service need</b>  Need for a specific service	(i) Need to connect with other adoptive parents

**(a) Sub-theme: Satisfied with pre-adoption services**

The first sub-theme which was identified was that the participants were satisfied with pre-adoption services. One category emerged out of this sub-theme:

**(i) Category: *Preparation was good***

The only category to emerge from this sub-theme, was that **preparation was good**. Half of the participants found that preparation offered by the adoption organisation was good.

The following narratives showcase this view:

“Yes, they were amazing. I think they do really good work in preparing you and getting you to start thinking about issues. I think similarly, Arise, they don’t necessarily give you answers, but they do provide you with questions and resources to get your mind ticking over issues, which is really good, I think from that perspective.” (Participant C1)

“The pre is great. I think they prepare you as best they can.” (Participant S2)

The above views indicate that half of the participants experienced pre-adoption preparation as being good. It can, however, be assumed that because half the participants were satisfied with the pre-adoption support they received, that these participants made use of the same few private adoption organisations.

**(b) Sub-theme: Pre-adoption services not offered**

The second sub-theme which was identified was that the participants were not offered pre-adoption services. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category: *Lack of pre-adoption services***

The only category which emerged from this sub-theme, was lack of pre-adoption services. Less than half of the participants reported that they were **not offered pre-adoption services**.

The following narratives showcase the views of participants as it relates to the category:

“No. Was like “here’s your baby.” In fact, it was almost 12 years ago but when I got Emily the house mom or whoever she was said, “Just remember to feed her every four hours or she’ll die”. I felt like I was taking home a kitten. (Participant N1)

“Nothing. We had a meeting. Social worker came to our house. She had tea. We had our moms there. We thought it would be nice. And she had a chit-chat to my mom and my mom-in-law. And that was it.” (Participant D1)

“There was no emotional preparation for what is actually probably the biggest day of your life.” (Participant S1)

These views highlight lack of pre-adoption services offered to participants. This finding concurs with Doubell (2014:163) once again, who reported that none of the participants (who were social workers) indicated that a standard training or preparation programme for transracially adopting parents exists. Although numerous participants mentioned that adequate screening and preparation is important, it was not specified exactly what this training would consist of. Hence, each organisation is able to decide if they would like to offer training, and if so, what the training will entail. The inconsistency and frequent absence of this service appears to have a negative impact on the experience of the adoptive parents.

### **(c) Sub-theme: Satisfied with post-adoption services**

The third sub-theme which was identified was that the participants were satisfied with post-adoption services. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

#### **(i) Category: *Post-adoption support was offered***

The only category to be identified, was that less than half of the participants reported being **satisfied with post-adoption support services** offered.

Narratives supporting this view are discussed below:

“After the adoption, after she was placed, they phoned the next morning to say, “How are you doing? How was your first night? Have you survived?” and to ask her name. And then we had the post adoption meeting, which was absolutely fine. I guess I haven’t really felt that I’ve needed anything more.” (Participant H).

“Post – they did, we had a home visit and we had quite a few e-mails, but we didn’t reach out...and they always said, “We’d be happy to send someone to spend the night”, and luckily, I had my mom so that wasn’t necessary.” (Participant J2)

These narratives highlight that adoption organisations and social workers reached out to participants to offer support once the adopted child had been placed with adoptive parents. This finding is perplexing, as the study revealed that participants who used the same adoption organisations as participants whose narratives are recorded above, reported not receiving any post- adoption support.

The above highlights the fact that not all adoptive parents received the same service from social workers at the organisations they made use of. It can be surmised that adoptive parents who the social workers feel are in need of post-adoption support will receive the service, overlooking parents who they believe will cope better with the transition of becoming an immediate family. Alternatively, the inconsistency in providing the service could indicate that there are no systems in place to ensure that all adoption social workers follow the same steps when offering the service.

The above is consistent with Doubell's (2014:163) findings, which state that social workers reported a standard training or preparation programme for transracially adoptive parents does not exist.

#### **(d) Sub-theme: Post-adoption services not offered**

The fourth sub-theme which was identified was that the participants were not offered post-adoption services. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

##### **(i) Category: *Lack of post-adoption services***

The only category to be identified was that less than half of the participants were **not offered post-adoption services**.

The following narratives support this view:

"I don't know any adoptive families that have had follow up where a social worker has come and checked on what's going on. Like, as in come and sat with them for a period." (Participant A2)

"Support really came from ourselves and our family." (Participant N2)

"There's never been a follow-up. You hear about the follow up. There's never been a follow-up. Never seen a social worker since she was placed." (Participant W)

The above views, which indicate that post adoption services were not offered to the participants, could imply that participants did not reach out for post-adoption support as they were either not aware that such services exist, or were unsure of how to access the service.

Hartinger-Saunders, Trouteaud and Johnson's (2014) study, corresponds with the above. The authors found that the majority of adoptive families who report needing services for themselves or their child never access those services. They are either unaware of how and where to access the necessary services or the services do not exist. Although the impact of various post-adoption services on adoption stability and child and family well-being is not clear, there is evidence to suggest that post-adoption support has helped families to maintain adopted children in their homes despite experiencing significant issues (Avery, cited by Hartinger-Saunders et al., 2014).

#### **(e) Sub-theme: Need for a specific service**

The fifth and final sub-theme which was identified was that the participants had a need for a specific service. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

##### **(i) Category: *Need to connect with other adoptive parents***

The only category to emerge from this sub-theme was the **need to connect with other adoptive parents**. Less than half of the participants suggested that they would have liked to have been able to connect with other adoptive parents.

Narratives supporting this view are discussed below:

“And I think, I would have loved to have spoken to more people who've adopted transracially, just to understand what are the things we could be doing.” (Participant D1)

“I think that part of the agency's job should be some post maybe workshops or groups, so they kind of just say ah, there's a support group. It would be nice to go back in groups and chat about it. Debrief. How has it been? What have other families experienced?” (Participant S2)

“What would have been helpful to me is if she hooked me up with other people who have adopted in this area. Because it's a very different thing, having an adopted child. I mean, yes, it's your child, and it always will be, but the dynamics are slightly different and it would've been nice to know other families ... and there are.” (Participant C2)



The above views indicate that the participants sought support in other adoptive parents. This finding that parents felt the need to interact with other adoptive parents concurs with Dance & Farmer (2014), who carried out research on the adoption process in the United Kingdom and found that prospective adopters were grateful for the opportunity to meet other people in the same situation during preparation groups. Participants reported a significant amount of mutual support was provided during the preparation period. By comparison, preparation groups are not mandatory in South Africa. Although government agencies do present training courses for prospective adoptive parents, private adoption organisations do not provide this service

#### ***4.3.4.3 Challenges experienced with society as a system***

Participants were asked to describe experiences they viewed as challenging, regarding societal perceptions towards transracial adoption.

**Table 4.5: Challenges faced by participants regarding societal perceptions towards transracial adoption**

<b>THEME: Challenges faced by participants regarding societal perceptions towards transracial adoption</b>	
<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>(a) Absence of racial resemblance between parents and child</b>	(i) Longed to be inconspicuous as a family
	(ii) Black people made comments and asked imposing questions
<b>(b) Protection of child's heritage</b>	(i) Efforts are made to expose children to their culture
	(ii) Children are exposed to African birth language
<b>(c) Lack of knowledge about adoption</b>	(i) Society is ignorant about adoption
	(ii) Strangers commented on how fortunate the adopted child was
<b>(d) Inappropriate questions in/from public</b>	(i) Unprepared to answer adoption related questions from strangers

**(a) Sub-theme: Absence of racial resemblance between parents and child**

The first sub-theme which was identified was that participants experienced the absence of racial resemblance as a challenge. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category: *Longed to be inconspicuous as a family***

The first category that was identified was that participants **longed to be inconspicuous as a family**. A quarter of the participants experienced not being able to blend in as a family, as a challenge. They found that this was due to the fact that their child was a different colour to them. Members of society stared at them and asked questions which made them feel uncomfortable.

Narratives supporting this view are discussed below:

“Just being conspicuous. I have had a couple of black people say to me ‘is he yours?’. So I say, ‘yes’ and then ...this kind of confused look.” (Participant C1)

“The blending in thing is impossible. It just doesn’t happen anymore.” (Participant L1)

“And sometimes I don’t want to be conspicuous. Sometimes I just want to go to Spur and not have everyone look at you.” (Participant S1)

The above views clearly indicate that participants longed to be inconspicuous as a family. This finding corresponds with those of Findlay (2006:38), who states that members of the public stare and blatantly observe the family. Participants in this study claimed that while this could be “annoying and uncomfortable” at times, people typically stare out of interest rather than with negative intentions. Participants believed that being stared at would decrease as the numbers of families who adopt transracially increases, as it will become more commonplace in society.

Although Findlay’s (2006:38) study was carried out twelve years ago and transracial adoption has since become more widespread in South Africa, it is apparent that transracial adoption does present different challenges to families who adopt children of the same race. These challenges are unavoidable due to the visual appearance of the family.

**(ii) Category:** *Black people made comments and asked imposing questions*

The second category identified was that **black people made comments and asked imposing questions**. Almost half of participants reported being made to feel uncomfortable by comments made by and questions asked by black people.

Narratives following narratives highlight this view:

“Like walking in a shop and a black person will say, ‘Is this your child?’ and I say, ‘Yes’ and they say ‘Ow, it can’t be! You swear she’s your child?’” (Participant T)

“Like in a queue at Truworths, where everything is quiet and you’re just waiting to get to the front of the line. Then you hear, ‘Whose child is this? Who is the father?’ The child needs to know...you’ll upset the ancestors...’, that sort of thing. (Participant L2)

The above narratives highlight that black people frequently make comments or ask imposing questions surrounding why a white person has a black child in their care. Participants felt judged and described the experience as negative. This finding does not correspond with Findlay’s (2006:38) South African study, which claimed that many of the interactions with black members of the public were supportive of the transracial adoption, although there were limited instances where it was inferred that black children should be raised by black parents.

Participants in both studies were more concerned about what the impact the negative remarks made at a community or societal level may have on their children, than their own emotions which were emitted by the comments.

**(b) Sub-theme: Protection of child’s heritage**

The second sub-theme which was identified was the protection of the child’s heritage. Although extremely conscious and concerned regarding this issue, participants did not experience it as a challenge. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category:** *Efforts are made to expose children to their culture*

The first category to emerge from this sub-theme, was that participants made efforts to expose their children to their culture. Half of the participants felt strongly about making efforts to expose their children to their birth culture.

This is evident in the narratives below:

“We have a project in the Eastern Cape so the idea is to go to the Eastern Cape with the kids when my work pays for me to go, which is going to be soon. I have had some people from the Eastern Cape look up her biological family. They came back to me and said they found her whole clan and these are their contacts, so at some time I can follow that up.” (Participant L2)

“But at this stage our step is just to expose him to the Xhosa culture and tradition and for us to read up.” (Participant J2)

The above findings indicate that participants were very aware of the fact that if they did not take responsibility for ensuring that their child was exposed to their culture of origin, it would be to their child’s detriment. Participants therefore researched their child’s cultural roots and made informed decisions on how they would introduce their child to their culture of origin. As adoptive parents’ culture was so dissimilar to that of their adopted child, the decision to expose their child to their culture of origin was one of introspection and intent.

Although parents were mindful about exposing their child to their culture, Doubell (2014:161) found that it can be difficult for adoptive parents to decide on which practices to expose their child/children to, as many cultural practices may be very different to those practiced by the parents. Adoptive parents should expose their children to their cultural roots with the intention of the children making decisions for themselves with regards to the importance of cultural practices. This view is consistent with multicultural planning, which refers to the practice of creating new opportunities for transracially adopted children to be immersed into their culture of origin (Klevan, 2001:113; Vonk, 2001:251). It is undoubtedly essential that adoptive parents assist with this immersion, in order to create a space where discussions surrounding culture can be considered and agreed upon.

## (ii) **Category:** *Children are exposed to African birth language*

The second category to be identified was that **children are exposed to their African birth language**. Almost three quarters of the participants ensured that their children would learn their birth language.

The following narratives support this view:

“I have started teaching them the basics and our domestic worker is helping me with that, so we are getting them to greet her now in Xhosa when she comes we encourage the development.” (Participant C1)

“So she’s learning Xhosa, ‘cos we’re trying to expose her to that.” (Participant D1)

The narratives of participants above indicate that exposing their child to their African birth language, was a priority for them as adoptive parents. This finding concurs with those of Findlay (2006:49), who found that transracially adoptive parents were concerned about their child not being able to speak an African language. Participants in this study expressed desire for their child to learn a second language. Romani (2017:95) found that parents were adamant about teaching their children a second language. Furthermore, parents stated that this task was challenging, as they themselves did not speak an African language. Bilodeau (2015:15) states that all participants noted that adoptive parents should make the effort to acquire knowledge about their adopted child’s culture of birth. One of the various means in which this can be done, is to teach the child their cultural language.

### **(c) Sub-theme: Lack of knowledge about adoption**

The third sub-theme which was identified was that society lacked knowledge about adoption. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

#### **(i) Category: *Society is ignorant about adoption***

The first category to be identified in this sub-theme was that society is ignorant about adoption. Almost half of the participants experienced members of society as being uninformed on the topic of adoption.

Narratives supporting this view are discussed below:

“But generally, I think people haven’t had any like really negative...I think actually more family friends. And I think it’s about ignorance, it’s about educating people.” (Participant C2)

“Some people can get very, very offended by remarks. I often think that people ... it comes from ignorance, not from them trying to be negative or offensive.” (Participant L3)

It is evident from the above narratives, that participants found members of society ignorant about adoption. In order to resolve this dilemma, society needs to be educated on this topic. In this regard, Langenhoven (2017:108) ascertained that perspectives on adoption could be improved by educating society, by schools approaching the topic, and by research being published. Katz and Doyle (cited by Doubell, 2014), studied the attitudes and thinking patterns of the public towards trans-racial adoption. The authors found that transracial families conjured more negative attitudes than same-race families. The authors inferred that adoption

social workers and organisations have a vital role to play in educating and preparing prospective parents about the negative reactions they could potentially encounter as a transracial family. Such racial awareness training is likely to be something that should essentially form part of pre- and post- adoption services.

**(ii) Category:** *Strangers commented on how fortunate the adopted child was*

The second category to be identified in this sub-theme was that **strangers commented on how fortunate the adopted child was**. The majority of participants stated that they had experienced strangers commenting on how fortunate their adopted child was, and experienced this as a challenge.

The following narratives highlight this view:

“Yeah...it’s not coming from a bad place. If you talk to people on the street, they do say, ‘they must be so happy to be with you’ or ‘so fortunate to be with you’ but it doesn’t bother me. I just say well I’m really fortunate to have them.” (Participant T)

“I’m not very comfortable with hearing that. I know people mean well, but no. I usually end up saying no, actually we’re the lucky ones.” (Participant N2)

“Because I wonder how it feels for her to constantly be told she’s lucky to be adopted by me. I mean, where does that place her in the whole scene of things?” (Participant S1)

The above views clearly illustrate that participants found it challenging when strangers commented on how fortunate their adopted child was. These views correspond with those of Brown (n.d.), who claims that all children who have permanent and loving homes are fortunate. While understanding that the comment is well-intended, adopted children should not be made to feel more grateful than others, for something that ALL children need and deserve.

**(d) Sub-theme: Inappropriate questions in/from public**

The fourth sub-theme which was identified was managing questions. One category emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category:** *Unprepared to answer adoption related questions from strangers*

The only category to emerge, was that participants felt **unprepared to answer adoption related questions from strangers**. Almost all of the participants stated that they felt unprepared when confronted with this situation.

The following narratives showcase this view:

“Yes, they are curious, and I don’t get my nose out of joint when people ask even personal questions. In the beginning I always thought I need to have the right answer, but if I don’t have an answer that’s also okay. I just smile, you know, if I don’t feel like I have a good answer at the time, but the questions definitely have got less and less over time.” (Participant J1)

“What kind of right do you have to ask that kind of question? Why? Why do you think you can ask that kind of question? Like ‘where is her mother’ or ‘where, when will she see them again?’ Like, who are you? Why are you asking this question? What kind of manners do you have to even ask this question? I don’t even know your name!” (Participant D2)

The narratives above highlight that participants feel unprepared to answer adoption related questions from strangers. Participants found that they were often on the receiving end of intrusive questions from strangers, in the presence of their children, which caused the parents anxiety. This feeling of anxiety appears to be warranted, as Brown (n.d.) found that in situations where their parents are asked intrusive questions by strangers, adopted children wanted their parents to curtail the progression of the insensitive enquiry immediately. Children found that if their parents engaged in communicating with strangers, it made them feel different to other children. They wanted to be seen as “regular” children, and not have people pity them, as this highlighted the difference between them and other children. Their desire was to fit in and not be seen as different. The author adds that parents’ primary role is to protect their children. In attempting to ensure that their children’s self-respect is honoured, parents should not tolerate insinuations that their adopted children are of lesser worth than any other children.

With regards to the above, Findlay (2006:41) found that some single adoptive parents answered difficult questions concerning transracial adoption in front of their children, in order to provide a model for how questions could be answered. Coughlin and Abromowitz (cited by Findlay, 2006:41) state that the importance of transracial adoptive parents answering questions correctly, is the difference between protecting their child’s sense of belonging and identity, and allowing it to be harmed.

The above demonstrates that adoptive parents have varying coping skills when it comes to managing intrusive questions being asked. While some parents may choose not to engage with strangers, others may choose to answer questions in an attempt to provide their children with the tools to be prepared for questions regarding transracial adoption.

#### ***4.3.4.4 Three main challenges experienced by participants throughout the adoption process***

Participants were asked to describe what they experienced as the three main challenges throughout the adoption process.



**Table 4.6: Views of participants regarding the three main challenges experienced throughout the adoption process**

<b>THEME: Views of participants regarding the three main challenges experienced throughout the adoption process.</b>	
<b>SUB-THEME</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
(a) Fear for the future of the child	(i) Child would struggle with identity
	(ii) Child would be exposed to racism
(b) Feeling judged by society	(i) Difficult to blend in to society
	(ii) Lack of education about adoption in society
(c) Inadequately prepared for transracial adoption	(i) Lack of preparation for adoption
	(ii) Lack of post adoption support
(d) Struggled with administrative procedures to register the child at Department of Home Affairs	(i) Negative and lengthy experience

**(a) Sub-theme: Fear for the future of the child**

The first sub-theme that came to the fore is concerned with half the participants who stated that they were fearful for the future of their child. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

**(i) Category:** *Child would struggle with identity*

The first category identified was that participants were **afraid that the child would struggle with identity**. Almost a quarter of the participants stated that they hoped their child would find a place in the world and not struggle with identity. Adoptive parents found that this challenge was imminent but felt inadequate to prepare their children for this challenge.

The following narratives support this view.

“I worry what is the future going to be like for her, like in terms of her identity and how she is going to feel in the world, where is her place going to be in the world?” (Participant D1)

“She went through a phase where she said she didn’t belong in the family...And the whole world crumbles for her and she doesn’t belong, so it was a lot of reinforcing.” (Participant S1)

The above narratives clearly express the fear of transracial adoptive parents regarding the possible struggle with identity that their children may experience in the future. According to Erikson (cited by Papalia et al., 2008:469), the chief task of adolescence is to seek to develop a coherent sense of self, including the role he or she is to play in society. Feeling fearful for their children’s identity development in the future is justified, according to Steinberg and Hall (2000:54), who maintain that children who are transracially adopted have unique challenges around developing a strong racial identity, as a great deal of self-image is formed by the way we perceive our racial and ethnic heritage and how we perceive society’s view of that heritage. The authors further state that the challenge for adoptive parents is to encourage a clear definition and value of self so that children value themselves for who they are.

**(ii) Category:** *Child would be exposed to racism*

The second category which came to the fore, was that participants **feared that their child would be exposed to racism**. The majority of participants reported being fearful for their child.

Narratives supporting this view are discussed below:

“I think we worry for, especially in this country like South Africa where there are a lot of issues around race, we worry for his future, his safety.” (Participant N2)

“The fact that racism is real, and privilege is real, and she is going to have to face it. And we’re not equipped alone to help her deal with it, because we’ll never fully understand as white people how that will feel.” (Participant S2)

These findings indicate that participants were fearful that their child may be exposed to racism in the future and were concerned about to protect them from this exposure. This finding has been highlighted in literature by Klevan (2012:91), who states that racism is still a reality in South Africa, and that transracial families are likely to be confronted by it. The author emphasises that transracial adoptive parents should become culturally competent, with specific reference to survival skills. These skills involve parents being capable of preparing their adopted child for racial prejudice. Adoptive parents are encouraged to expand their own racial awareness and gain knowledge of their child's cultural history. As it is unlikely that white adoptive parents will themselves have been victims of racism, being racially aware will assist them in guiding their children in being able to manage such situations in a healthy way. Steinberg & Hall (2000:42) concur by stating that racism does exist and adoptive parents must acknowledge that children who are adopted transracially have a family of one race, but by definition and skin colour, are part of another race. According to Melina (2002:229), the challenge is enabling transracially adopted children to feel that they can be loyal to both races.

#### **(b) Sub-theme: Feeling judged by society**

The second sub-theme which was identified was that less than a quarter of the participants experiences feeling judged by society. Two categories emerged out of this sub-theme.

##### **(i) Category : *Difficult to blend in to society***

The first category to be identified was that participants experienced finding it **difficult to blend into society** as a family. Most of the participants experienced found that not being able to blend in, was a challenge.

The following narratives support this view:

“The blending in thing is impossible, it just doesn’t happen anymore. Some days I just want to be a mom on the beach with my kids. I don’t want to be someone else’s lesson.” (Participant L1)

“A lot of people sort of saying, “Wow, it’s an amazing thing you’ve done” but ... I mean, she’s not a rescue project, she’s my family.” (Participant M)

“Every now and again being reminded of, oh yeah, actually there are people who frown upon this or don’t like it or it challenges some kind of core belief that they have and they feel affected. And that’s a hard thing to deal with.” (Participant L1)

The views of participants indicate that as a family, they feel judged by others. Romanini’s (2017:99) study had similar findings in that post-adoption, a transracial adoptive family becomes more conspicuous, which in turn renders them the target of unwelcome stares and comments. De Haymes and Simon (2003:261) concur, and note that the increase in attention because of racial differences between parent and child is linked to an increase in unwanted stares, comments and confused reactions. Adoptive parents feel vulnerable, as they are continuously in the spotlight. Comparably, Miller, (cited by Romanini, 2017:99) found that transracially adopting families recounted a rise in being noticed in public. The family unit was observed with confusion in that onlookers had difficulty comprehending the relation between family members as there was no physical recognition of the family as a unit.

**(ii) Category: *Lack of education about adoption in society***

**Lack of education about adoption** was the second category identified. More than half of the participants felt that society needs to be educated regarding adoption.

The narratives below highlight this view:

“Ignorance. Definitely ignorance. They’ve just not considered the background. It’s very one-faceted. And transracial adoption is multi-faceted, and complicated. It carries a lot of loss and rejection and all of that. And they just don’t know that. You don’t know that until you’ve been in it.” (Participant S2)

“How adoption is understood as, like I said at the beginning, sort of an almost transactional thing.” (Participant J3)

“But I find old people are very ignorant in general and their comments, they think that they are being kind but their comments could be hurtful when she starts to understand them.” (Participant S2)

The above narratives clearly indicate that participants experienced society’s lack of education with regards to transracial adoption as a challenge. This finding is mirrored by Langenhoven (2017:102), who found that adoptive parents believed that society’s view on adoption could be improved by educating society through formal education in schools, open conversations and

reporting adoption research. Educating society was deemed as a necessary practice for adoption to be understood and accepted within society, as well as for increasing the adoption rate.

The above highlights the need for education in society, suggests how this process could transpire, and indicates which professionals should be involved in this manner of education.

### **(c) Sub-theme: Inadequately prepared for transracial adoption**

Inadequate preparation for transracial adoption was the third sub-theme that came to the fore. Almost half of the participants were not offered pre and post adoption services by the organisation. This sub-theme, which has re-emerged, was previously identified when participants discussed challenges experienced with support services.

#### **(i) Category: *Lack of preparation for adoption***

The first category to be identified was **insufficient preparation for adoption**. A quarter of the participants experienced not receiving sufficient preparation for adoption and the challenges they could encounter.

The following narratives showcase the views of participants as it relates to the category:

“I think being more prepared for a baby, like parenting classes probably would’ve been helpful. I had to do all my reading post baby.” (Participant N1)

“Inadequate preparation for adoptive families...the lack of support. And the lack of understanding of adoption related grief.” (Participant A2)

The above findings indicate that participants experienced not receiving sufficient pre-adoption preparation. Participants communicated the need for pre-adoption preparation on how to manage challenges regarding the race and culture of their child, guidance on parenting issues, and management of emotions associated with becoming a transracial adoptive parent.

Romanini’s (2017:86) study corresponds with these findings. Participants in the author’s study found that while they were satisfied with the pre-adoption support they had received from the organisation they had used, they were aware that other adoptive parents who adopted through other organisations, did not receive the additional support they had received. This finding is in accordance with Findlay (2006) who states that not all adoption agencies and organisations provide prospective adoptive parents with support and training specific to transracial adoption.

**(ii) Category:** *Lack of post adoption support*

**Lack of post adoption** support was the second category to be identified. Almost half of the participants felt that they were not supported after adopting their child.

This is evident in the narratives of the following participants:

“The fact that the child is left with you and everyone else walks away.” (Participant W)

“I think I felt, not abandoned, but I felt that I’d done my job, they’d done their jobs and that relationship had come to the end. But it was a huge part of my life, you know. I mean, and it’s this special private thing that you go through with them. And then you’re on your own.” (Participant C2)

This finding indicates that post adoption, adoptive parents feel abandoned by the adoption organisation when support services are lacking. A trusting relationship where prospective adoptive parents feel supported by the social worker pre-adoption, suddenly disintegrates, leaving adoptive parents feeling alone. In this regard, Romani’s (2017) study found that the adoption organisation as well as the social worker were viewed as an essential part of the adoption process. Participants felt they were able to trust them and therefore felt confident in recognising that they would be supported during the process.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter served to present the findings of the empirical study which was conducted through a semi-structured interview. Study participants generally viewed the challenges experienced as transracial adoptive parents as being positive. It was found that the majority of individuals the participants came into contact with, whether known to them or not, were encouraging and supportive regarding transracial adoption. However, participants found that many members of the black population were opposed to transracial adoption and confronted adoptive parents by making insolent remarks and asking offensive questions. With regard to this, participants were of the opinion that education of society is crucial for the success of transracial adoption and in healing racial inconsistencies of the past in South Africa.

In addition, many participants highlighted the lack of pre and post adoption services offered to them by adoption organisations. They reported feeling unprepared to manage the challenges associated with transracial adoption.

The final study objective will be addressed in the following chapter, which will examine the conclusions and recommendations of the researcher.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1. INTRODUCTION**

This study aimed to explore the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents in South Africa. This was achieved by implementing the four primary research objectives.

The first objective of this study was met in chapter 2, where policy documents and legislation pertaining to adoption were explored in order to gain an understanding of transracial adoption within the South African context. The second objective of this study was addressed in chapter 3 which described transracial adoption within an ecological perspective and to identify possible challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents. Chapter 4 aimed to achieve the study's third objective by exhibiting the empirical investigation of the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents in South Africa.

The purpose of this chapter is to meet the fourth objective of the study by presenting the conclusions obtained from the study and making appropriate recommendations.

#### **5.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conclusions and recommendations explored in this chapter are based on findings of the empirical investigation and are presented in a similar format to that of chapter 4. The order will therefore follow that of the semi-structured interview schedule.

##### **5.2.1 Profile of the participants**

The investigations in this section focused on the participant's gender, age, their marital status and population group. In addition, information on education and current employment of the participants, was obtained.

All participants were female, with the majority of participants were between the ages of 41 and 50 years and married. Regarding population groups, all participants were from the white population group. Concerning education, all the participants had completed matric, and the majority had obtained a degree or post graduate degree. Finally, with regard to employment, the majority of participants were employed, either by employers or self-employed.



**It is recommended that, with regards to the profile particulars of the transracial adoptive parents:**

- Adoption organisations should market adoption more readily to the black population group. This could be done by educating the group by acknowledging their culture and beliefs, while educating them regarding the dilemma faced by the mass of children living in children's homes, who need families.

### **5.2.2 Biological and Adopted Children**

The majority of participants had no biological children and had adopted one child only. With regard to race of the adopted children, the majority of the adopted children were from the black population group and the minority were from the coloured population group.

It could be presumed that because the majority of participants were married and only had one adopted child, that they had experienced infertility problems before deciding to adopt. However, this was not the case. It was established that the majority of participants had made a conscious decision to adopt, regardless of whether they could have biological children or not. It can therefore be concluded that participants chose to adopt due to being single, having a life-long desire to adopt, prior connection to a specific child or prior exposure to adoption.

The majority of children were between the ages of birth and one year old at the time of adoption, while the majority of the children were between the ages of five and ten years old at the time the study was carried out. As part of the criteria for inclusion in the study was that participants must have adopted their child within the last 10 years, the majority of adoptees were adopted when less than 1 year old.

**It is recommended that, with regard to the biological and adopted children of participants:**

- Child protection organisations should be conscious of the fact that according to the Section 236 of the Children's Act (38) of 2005, consent to adopt a child is not required if the guardian or parent/s have consistently failed to fulfil his or her parental responsibilities towards the child during the last 12 months. This would place older children in care, in a position to be adopted without having to obtain consent from parent/s, preventing them from being placed in foster care for lengthy periods of time. This may be more suitable for older adoptive parents, as it will narrow the age gap

between child and parents. Foster care is often not in the best interest of child as it lacks permanency.

### **5.2.3 The Adoption Process**

Concerning the adoption process, almost half of the participants indicated that their status at the time of adopting their child was married, with no biological children. With regard to the type of adoption agency used, the majority of participants indicated that they had used private adoption agencies. Although more expensive than government organisations, participants indicated that private agencies offer a better service. It can therefore be concluded that participants who used government organisations, did so due to financial constraints rather than a personal preference.

Regarding the length of time the adoption process took, the majority of participants indicated that the process took between 6 and 12 months.

The majority of participants indicated that their experience of the adoption process was positive and uncomplicated. With regard to form of adoption, the majority of participants were presented with closed adoption as a form due to the circumstances of the adoptable child.

**It is recommended that, with regard to the experiences of participants with the adoption process:**

- Additional adoption social workers are needed in organisations which are accredited by the Department of Social Development to do adoptions, thereby easing the workload of these social workers and ultimately bringing the service received in line with that of the private sector, while remaining affordable.

### **5.2.4 Challenges Experienced Regarding Transracial Adoption**

#### *5.2.4.1 Challenges Experienced with Immediate Relationships*

Concerning challenges faced with immediate relationships, all couples who were in a relationship (either married or co-habiting) agreed that consensus between the couple had to be reached prior to adoption. A minority of the participants found that post adoption spousal challenges were due to becoming parents and not specifically related to the transracial adoption. It can be concluded that although couples planning to have biological children together should also reach consensus before actively trying to conceive, because transracial

adoption is laden with specific challenges, it is imperative for prospective adoptive parents to reach consensus, to avoid putting additional pressure on their relationship.

On the topic of challenges experienced with family members' responses to the adoption, almost half the participants stated that it took time for family members to adjust to the idea of the transracial adoption. Grandparents were indicated as being slow to respond favourably to the transracial adoption. As a generation, who were brought up in a racist South Africa, grandparents struggled to accept a child of different race into their family, but once introduced to the child, accepted them without discrimination.

Regarding attachment as a potential challenge, a large majority of the participants experienced attaching to their adopted child immediately. More than a quarter of participants reported being anxious that they may not bond with their child, while a significant number of participants experienced being mindful about attachment.

The majority of participants who had other children, found that siblings bonded early with the adopted child and did not experience this as a challenge. It can be concluded that parents had been attentive and sensitive about preparing their children adequately for the arrival of their adopted sibling.

With regard to the ecological perspective, immediate relationships form part of the microsystem. It is here that face to face interaction with the immediate environment takes place. It can be concluded that although participants predicted that the above sub-themes would present challenges, in general they did not. The content and structure of the microsystem will determine whether an encounter is experienced as a challenge or not.

**It is recommended that, with regards to challenges experienced with immediate relationships:**

- Adoption organisations should provide pre-adoption counselling, to prepare adoptive parents for what they are likely to experience emotionally, as well as encouraging them not to put too much pressure on themselves to be perfect parents.
- Adoption organisations should present workshops for prospective adoptive parents, other children in the family, as well as immediate family members prior to the adoption application being made. This would serve to educate family members and include them in the adoption process, which could make them more accepting of the idea of transracial adoption, sooner.

- It would be beneficial for adoption social workers to have knowledge of the ecological systems theory, in order to have understanding of how to offer intervention to families at the micro level.

#### *5.2.4.2 Challenges Experienced when Faced with Systems Outside the Family*

With regard to challenges faced with systems outside of the family, participants found work colleagues and associates to be supportive, accepting and interested in the transracial adoption. Furthermore, employers were accommodating. Participants found colleagues and associates to be almost as supportive as family and friends.

Concerning their children's schools, more participants were satisfied with racial diversity in schools than participants who were not satisfied. Participants felt strongly about wanting their adopted children to be exposed to a racially inclusive educational environment and experienced this as a challenge.

On the topic of the child's biological family, participants experienced yearning for contact with their child's biological family as a challenge. Having gained a child and being aware that their child's biological parents had lost a child, participants experienced empathy towards the biological parents, and wanted to make contact with them.

On the subject of acceptance of the adopted children by their friends, more than half of the participants reported that their children's friends were accepting of them, without prejudice, and did therefore not experience this as a challenge. It can be concluded that young children are more accepting of racial diversity than older generations in South Africa, as they have grown up in a racially diverse society, in all spheres of their lives.

On the subject of other systems playing a part in systems outside of the family, participants identified the church as a system. Participants experienced varying reactions by church members, to the transracial adoption. Adoptive parents were shocked by negative reactions of church members, as they considered the church to be a safe space where they would not be judged. These negative reactions were experienced as a challenge.

Ecologically, systems outside of the family comprise of the mesosystem, which comprises of a system of microsystems. Systems of microsystems which do not interact with one another in a positive manner, will be experienced as challenges by adoptive parents. Participants experienced varying encounters with the mesosystem, finding the workplace and colleagues

supportive. Varying levels of satisfaction with racial diversity at schools were reported, while lack of contact with the biological family was experienced as a challenge. Although adopted children's friends were racially diverse and accepting, church congregations had varying responses to the transracial adoption, with some participants experiencing positive outcomes and others negative outcomes.

**It is recommended that, with regard to challenges experienced outside of the immediate family:**

- Prospective adoptive parents should do extensive research prior to adopting their child, to ensure that schools in their catchment area meet their requirements with regard to being racially diverse.
- Adoption organisations should sufficiently prepare prospective adoptive parents for the range of emotions which go hand-in-hand with adoption. While focusing on their newly adopted child, adoptive parents do not consider the emotional aspects of becoming adoptive parents.
- Parenting support groups would be the perfect space for conversations regarding this topic to surface. Regarding the ecological perspective, support groups would be able to share experiences, thereby becoming aware of the systems which could present challenges.

#### *5.2.4.3 Challenges Experienced with Support Systems*

With regard to challenges experienced with interaction with support systems, half of the participants reported receiving services by the adoption organisation, which prepared them adequately for the transracial adoption. By comparison, less than half of the participants reported not having received any pre-adoption services. On the subject of post-adoption services, the same amount of participants stated that they were satisfied with post-adoption services, as were participants who reported not having received any post-adoption services. Participants mentioned that a service which they would have preferred, would have been to connect with other adoptive parents.

With regard to the ecological system, participants found interaction with the exosystem, namely support systems, challenging. Participants and the adoptive family as a system were negatively affected by the exosystem.

**It is recommended that, with regard to challenges experienced with support systems:**

- As previously mentioned, adoption organisations accredited to process adoptions by the Department of Social Development, are under-staffed. They could consider utilizing consultants in private practice, to provide comprehensive pre and post adoption counselling regarding the possible challenges transracial adoptive parents may face.
- Parenting support groups should be initiated by the adoption organisations, with the intention of the parents eventually taking control of the group, deciding what to discuss, which dates to meet, where to convene and how they plan to network with others. By managing the group themselves, they would be more inclined to network than if they relied on the organisation to do so it for them.
- Adoption social workers should have a clear understanding of the ecological perspective. Becoming knowledgeable of which systems are most likely to be impacted upon when parents adopt transracially would assist with intervention choice when offering support.

*5.2.4.4 Challenges Experienced with Society as a System*

On the topic of experiences of challenges with society as a system, a quarter of the participants experienced the absence of racial resemblance as a challenge. Regarding exposing their adopted child to their birth culture, half of the participants felt strongly about exposing their adopted child/children to their birth culture, while almost three quarters of the participants ensured that their children would learn their birth language. On the subject of managing questions from strangers, the overall majority of participants described being unprepared to answer questions from strangers. Considering comments from members of society that the adopted child should be grateful, almost all of the participants stated that they had experienced being at the receiving end of this remark. Participants described feeling uncomfortable with this remark, as it was made while the children were in hearing range.

Concerning the ecological perspective, participants experienced challenges with the macrosystem. They found that society was uneducated with regard to transracial adoption, hence exhibiting behaviour which adoptive parents found challenging to tolerate.

**It is recommended that, with regards to experiences of challenges with society as a system:**

- Adoptive parents should attend mandatory pre-adoption workshops which focus on multicultural training to prepare them for exposing their children to their origin of culture, as well as preparing them for becoming possible victims of racial discrimination.
- Government could consider including adoption education to their programme when approaching all schools to do presentations on topics of importance or considering adding adoption as a topic for discussion in Life Skills. The future generation would then be educated regarding adoption, thereby minimising challenges likely to be experienced by transracial adoptive parents on the macro level.

*5.2.4.5 Three Main Challenges Experienced Throughout the Adoption Process*

Concerning the three main challenges experienced throughout the adoption process, participants identified fearing for the future of their child with regard to the child's possible struggle with identity, as well as protecting the child from being exposed to racism.

On the topic of feeling judged by society, participants found it difficult to blend in as a family and felt that society was ignorant regarding adoption.

Inadequate preparation for transracial adoption was viewed by almost half of the participants as a challenge, with insufficient preparation and lack of post adoption support highlighted as obstacles presented by adoption organisations.

The negative and lengthy experience of administrative procedures to register their adopted child at the Department of Home Affairs, was cited as a challenge by more than a quarter of the participants.

Finally, with regard to the three main challenges experienced by participants throughout the adoption process, it was found that ecologically, the majority of challenges were experienced in the macrosystem (with society) as well as the exosystem (support systems).

**It is recommended that, with regard to the three main challenges experienced throughout the adoption process:**

- Extensive adoption workshops could make adoptive parents feel less anxious regarding their child's future as well as feeling judged by society. Although the circumstances surrounding their fears would not necessarily change, giving them the tools to manage their emotions would be of great support.

- Society should be educated regarding transracial adoption. As previously stated, if the education could start in schools, learners could educate others, thereby changing the perception of future generations regarding transracial adoption.
- Adoption organisations accredited by the Department of Social Development to process adoptions, should consider making use of consultants in private practice to offer pre and post adoption support where the organisation cannot, due to time and personnel constraints. The cost of this could be included in the service fees charged by the organisation.
- The Department of Home Affairs could consider having a specialised section where staff manage adoption administration only. This would fast-track administration and queries could be dealt with efficiently by staff, as they would be trained regarding adoption administration.

### **5.2.5 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Key findings and conclusions of the study found that challenges were experienced on all levels of the ecological system. In South Africa, there is a desperate need for same-race adoptions to increase - essentially for black adoptive parents to adopt black children. Recruiting black adoptive parents would have to involve educating them on the merits of adoption, while not discrediting their cultural beliefs.

Concerning challenges regarding societal perceptions about transracial adoption, it was the view of participants that education of society, particularly the older generation and the black population, is essential. In order to shift perceptions of society regarding transracial adoption, it is imperative for it to be viewed as a solution to a crisis, as well as offering a child a loving home and creating a family. Education regarding transracial adoption in schools could promote this change, ensuring that future generations understand the need for, and are accepting of transracial adoption. Participants in this study revealed that their children's friends were not racially prejudiced. With this in mind, education at schools surrounding transracial adoption could be a solution, as it would be accepted by learners. Learners could then impart their knowledge to friends and family, community and society, thereby ensuring that future generations have a clearer understanding of transracial adoption.



There is a dire need for adoption organisations to ensure that transracial adoptive parents are supported prior to adoption, throughout the adoption process and post adoption. Although administrative services on the part of the adoption organisations are typically met, pre and post adoption support is severely lacking. Prospective transracial adoptive parents need to be made aware of the realities of adopting transracially by being sufficiently prepared by adoption organisations. Challenges such as whether or not parents would be willing to expose their adopted children to their birth culture; deciding whether to encourage children to learn their birth language; how to manage their fear for their adopted child's future; and how to provide them with tools to manage racism should their children be confronted with it, are a few hurdles that many prospective parents are aware of prior to transracial adoption. However, they are not aware of how to overcome these hurdles when they present themselves.

Finally, with regards to participants receiving inconsistent pre and post adoption service, in order for all adoption organisations to offer a uniform service, training needs to be reviewed and all adoption social workers should be exposed to similar training. This will ensure uniformity with services offered by both government and private adoption organisations, and will offer the same service, regardless of the prospective adoptive parent's financial status.

### **5.2.6 FURTHER RESEARCH**

As a result of the study with regard to the challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents, it is suggested that further research focus on pre and post adoption support offered by adoption organisations, in order to gain insight into why support differs so considerably from one organisation to another. This information could be useful for adoption agencies to improve their services as well as considering regulating services to ensure that all prospective adoptive parents receive the same services and support, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Although some studies on this topic have been completed, further research on the experiences of young transracially adopted adults in South Africa who were adopted as infants and young children should be carried out, with the aim of investigating the challenges they have encountered throughout their adoption journey. Such research could prove helpful for prospective adoptive parents and their adopted children, in preparing them for the challenges they are likely to face as an inconspicuous family.

Further research could be conducted with transracial adoptive parents whose children are adolescents, where identity versus role confusion could present some unique challenges. This

research could prove invaluable in understanding the long-term psychosocial impact transracial adoption could have on adoptees.

Finally, research could be conducted to investigate the views of black South Africans on transracial adoption. This research could prove effective in educating the black population on the desperate need for black adoptive parents to adopt abandoned and orphaned children. Furthermore, it will give this population group a better understanding of why white parents are adopting black children, and the alternative future these children would have to face if transracial adoption was not a reality.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Abrahams, M. 2017. The definitive guide to adoption in SA. [Online]. From: [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). (Accessed: 25 March 2018).
- Adamec, C. & Laurie, C.M. 2007. *The Encyclopaedia of Adoption*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Publishing: New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Administrator. 2001. *Adoption in South Africa*. [Online]. From: <http://www.Adoption.org.za/> (Accessed: 9 March 2016).
- Adoption in South Africa: where, how and how much?* 2016. [Online]. From: [www.1life.co.za/blog/adoption-guide-sa](http://www.1life.co.za/blog/adoption-guide-sa). Accessed: 11 July 2017.
- African Union – a United and Strong Africa*. [Online]. From: [pages.au.int/acerwc/documents/African-charter-rights-and-welfare-child-acrwc](http://pages.au.int/acerwc/documents/African-charter-rights-and-welfare-child-acrwc). (Accessed 13 January 2017).
- A history of Apartheid in South Africa*. n.d. [Online]. From: [www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa](http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa). (Accessed: 20 August 2018).
- Ainsworth, M.D.S., Blehar, M.C., Waters, E., & Wall, S.N. 2015. *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Taylor & Francis: New York.
- Algood, C., Hong, J., Gourdine, R., & Williams, A. 2011. Maltreatment of children with developmental disabilities: An ecological systems analysis. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33(7), 1142-1148.
- Alpaslan, N.H. 2010. *Social work research: A step-by-step guide on how to conduct your fourth-year research project and write the research report*. Only study guide for SCK4810. Pretoria: University of Cape Town.
- Ashley, J. 2012. *The first time I saw my adopted child*. [Online]. Mom.Me. From: <https://mom.me/kids/4142-first-time-i-saw-my-adopted-child/>. Accessed 8 January 2018.
- Askeland, L. 2005. *Children and Youth in Adoption, Orphanages and Foster Care*. [Online]. From: [www.law.harvard.edu](http://www.law.harvard.edu). (Accessed: 12 April 2016).
- Atmore, E., & Biersteker, L. 1997. Transracial placement of children in Durban metropolitan area. *Social Work Practice*, 2, 26-31.

- Attwell, T. 2004. A Phenomenological Exploration of Adoptive Parents' Motivation for Transracial Adoption in South Africa. (Unpublished master's thesis). Online. From: <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2176/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1>). Accessed: 20 April 2018.
- Atzaba-Poria, N, Pike, A & Deater-Deckard, K. 2004. *Do risk factors for problem behaviour act in a cumulative manner? An examination of ethnic minority and majority children through the ecological perspective*. [Online]. From: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15056303](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15056303). (Accessed: 30 June 2016).
- Babbie, E. 2007. *The practice of social research, 11<sup>th</sup> ed.* Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Baden, L. 2011. Sibling relationships in transracial adoptive families. [Online]. From: [http://www.researchgat.net/publication/235734567\\_Sibling\\_relationships\\_in\\_transracial\\_adoptive\\_families](http://www.researchgat.net/publication/235734567_Sibling_relationships_in_transracial_adoptive_families)
- Baden, A. L., Gibbons, J. L., Wilson, S.L. & McGinnis, H. (2013) International Adoption: Counseling and the Adoption Triad, *Adoption Quarterly*, 16(3-4) 218-237.
- Barker, R.L. 2003. *The social work dictionary*. Washington, DC: National Association of Social Workers Press.
- Barn, R. & Kirton, D. 2012. Transracial adoption in Britain Politics, ideology and reality. *Adoption and Fostering*, 36(4):25-37.
- Bausch, R. S. 2006. Predicting willingness to adopt a child: A consideration of demographic and attitudinal factors. *Sociological Perspectives*, 49(1):47-65.
- Baxter, L., Norwood, K., Ashbury, B., Jannusch, A., & Sharp, K.M. 2012. Narrative Coherence in online stories told by members of the adoption triad. *Journal of family communication*, 12(4)265-283.
- Beauvais-Godwin, L. 2013. Preparing children for the adoption of a sibling: Recommendations for families considering intercountry adoption. *Adoption Advocate*, 60, 7-8.
- Bekker, J.C. 2008. Commentary on the Impact of the Children's Act on Selected Aspects of the Custody and Care of African Children in South Africa. *Orbiter*. 29(3):395-405.

Berry, M., Barth, R.P. & Needell, B. 1996. Preparation, support, and satisfaction of adoptive families in agency and independent adoptions. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 13(2): 157–183.

Big Ideas Simply Explained: The Psychology Book. [Online]. From: [http://ez.sun.ac.za/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/dkpsycbook.you\\_cannot\\_understand\\_a\\_system\\_until\\_you\\_try\\_to\\_change\\_it\\_kurt\\_lewin\\_1890\\_1947/0](http://ez.sun.ac.za/login?url=http://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/dkpsycbook.you_cannot_understand_a_system_until_you_try_to_change_it_kurt_lewin_1890_1947/0) (Accessed: 20 July 2016).

*Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. 2014. [Online]. From: <http://www.westerncape.gov.za/legislation/bill-rights-chapter2-constitution-republic-south-africa#28>. (Accessed 30 May 2016).

Blackie, D. E. 2014.a. *Child Abandonment and adoption in the context of African ancestral beliefs in contemporary urban South Africa*. [Online]. From: <http://www.adoptioncoalitionsa.org.za>. (Accessed: 5 February 2016)

Blackie, D. E. 2014.b. *Sad Bad & Mad – Exploring Child Abandonment in South Africa*. MA. Anth. thesis, Johannesburg, University of Witwatersrand.

Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C. & Kagee, A. 2006. *Fundamentals in social research methods: An African perspective*. Cape Town: Juta & Co.

Boivin, M. & Hassan, G. 2015. Ethnic identity and psychological adjustment in transracial adoptees: a review of the literature. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(7), 1084-1103.

Bowlby J. 1982. 2nd Attachment ed. Attachment and loss; vol (1). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Brabender, V.M. & Fallon, A.E. (ed). 2013. *Working with Adoptive Parents: Research, Theory and Therapeutic Interventions*. Wiley & Sons: New Jersey.

Brodzinsky, D.M., & Pinderhughes, E. 2002. Parenting and child development in adoptive families. In M.Bornstein (Ed.), Handbook for parenting: Volume 1. *Children and parenting* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 279-311). Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. 1994. Ecological models of human development. *International Encyclopaedia of Education*, Vol 3, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. Oxford: Elsevier.

Brooks, D., Simmell, C., Wind, L., & Barth, R.P. 2005. Contemporary adoption in the United States: Implications for the next wave of adoption theory, research and practice. In D.

Brown, J. n.d. *Answers to those embarrassing questions...from the perspective of an adopted child*. Online.

From:

[https://www.wacap.org/Portals/0/curious%20nieghbors%20and%20adoption%20questionsANSWERS%20TO%20THOSE%20EMBARRASSING%20QUESTIONS%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.wacap.org/Portals/0/curious%20nieghbors%20and%20adoption%20questionsANSWERS%20TO%20THOSE%20EMBARRASSING%20QUESTIONS%20(2).pdf).

Accessed: 30 May 2018.

Brown, R. 2013. *Transracial Adoption: Loving gift or theft of culture?* [Online]. From: [www.mg.co.za/article/2014-11-06-transracial-adodption-loving-gift-ot-theft-of-culture](http://www.mg.co.za/article/2014-11-06-transracial-adodption-loving-gift-ot-theft-of-culture). (Accessed: 6 April 2016).

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social Research Methods*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Camara, C. 2014. *A comparative study of metaperceptions of transracially adoptive mothers and adoptees in South Africa*. [Online]. From: [wiredspace.wits.ac.za/](http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/). (Accessed: April 2017).

Carter-Black, J. 2007. Teaching cultural competence: an innovative strategy grounded in the universality of storytelling as depicted in African and African American storytelling traditions. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 43(1): 31-50.

Child Information Gateway. 2015. [Online]. *Impact of adoption on adoptive parents*. From: <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pibs/factsheet/impact-parent/>. (Accessed 27 August 2017).

*Child Protection Statistics*. 2016. [Online]. From: <http://becomingamom.co.za/statistics>. (Accessed 30 December 2017).

*Comprehensive Report on the Review of the White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997*. 2016. [Online]. From: <http://www.gov.za/sites/www.gov.za/files/Comprehensive%20Report%20White%20Paper.pdf>. Accessed: 10 July 2017.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 108 of 1996.

- Cousins, J. 2003. Are we missing the match? Rethinking adopter assessment and child profiling. *Adoption and Fostering*, 27(4):7-18.
- Creswell, J.W. 2003. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach*. London: Sage Publications.
- Cultural issues for trans-cultural adoptions*. 2015. [Online]. From: [www.ithembalethu.org.za/cultural-issues-for-trans-cultural-adoptions](http://www.ithembalethu.org.za/cultural-issues-for-trans-cultural-adoptions). (Accessed: 28 August 2017).
- Dale, O., Smith, R., Norlin, J. M. & Chess, W. A. 2006. *Human behaviour and the social environment: social systems theory*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Boston: Pearson Education Inc.
- Dance, C. & Farmer, E. 2014. Changing lives and changing minds: the experiences of adoptive parents from application to approval. *Adoption & Fostering*, 38(2) 101-114.
- Davel, C. & Skelton, A. (2009). "Inter-country Adoption" paper presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Family Law Conference, Cape Town. [Online]. From: <http://www.millerdutoitcloeteinc.co.za/Paper%20-%20Dr%20Ann%20Skelton.ppt>. (Accessed: 10 May 2016).
- Davenport. 2008. *Creating a Family*. [Online]. From: [creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/transracial-adoption-revisited/](http://creatingafamily.org/adoption-category/transracial-adoption-revisited/). (Accessed: 5 February 2017)
- Davies, M. 2011. Intercountry adoption, children's rights and the politics of rescue. *Adoption & Fostering*, 35(4): 50-58.
- De Haymes, V.M. & Simon, S. 2003. Transracial adoption: families identify issues and needed support services. *Child Welfare*, 82(2): 251-272.
- De Oliveira, E., Barros, F., da Silva Anselmi, L., & Piccini, C. (2006). The quality of home environment in Brazil: An ecological model. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 15(5), 631-643.
- De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C.B., Delport, C.S.L. 2011. *Research at Grassroots: For the social science and human services professionals*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Van Schaik: Pretoria.
- De Vries, M. M. 2012. *The prevention of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders: an ecological approach*. (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).
- Department of Social Development. 2012. *White paper in families in South Africa*. Pretoria: Department of Social Development.

Department of Social Development. 2013. *Adoption Policy implementation: briefing by Department of Social Development*. [Online]. From: <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/15847/> (Accessed: 25 March 2018).

Donald, D., Lazarus, S., & Lolwana, P. 2010. *Educational psychology in social context* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Doubell, L. S. 2014. *Views of Social Workers on Trans-Racial Adoptions of Abandoned Children*. MA(SW) thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.

Du Plessis, A. 2015. *Experiences of foster parents and social workers involved in foster care placements*. [Online]. From: [dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/16317/Du\\_Plessis\\_A2015.pdf?sequence=1](https://dspace.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/16317/Du_Plessis_A2015.pdf?sequence=1). (Accessed: 1 May 2017).

Du Plooy, G.M. 2009. *Communication research: techniques, methods and applications*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cape Town: Juta.

*Everything you need to know about adopting a child in SA*. 2016. [Online]. From: [www.news24.com/You/Archive/everything-you-need-to-know-about-adopting-a-child-in-sa-20170728](http://www.news24.com/You/Archive/everything-you-need-to-know-about-adopting-a-child-in-sa-20170728). (Accessed 30 December 2017)

*Families for Russian and Ukranian Adoptees*. 2014. [Online]. From: [www.frua.org](http://www.frua.org). (Accessed: 23 July 2017).

*Family Finding and Matching in Adoption*. Report to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Bristol: School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol.

Farber, M.L.Z., Timberlake, E., Mudd, H.P. & Cullen, L. 2003. Preparing parents for adoption: an organisation experience. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 20(3):175-196.

Ferreira, S. 2009. *Interracial and intercultural adoption: A South African legal perspective*. Pretoria: University of South Africa. (Doctor of Laws). [Online]. From: <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/2881>. (Accessed: 16 March 2016).



- Ferreira, S. 2014. *The voice of the child in adoption in South Africa*. [Online]. From: [http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/22357/THRHR\\_August%202014.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/22357/THRHR_August%202014.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y). Accessed: 4 August 2018
- Findlay, S. 2006. *Exploring challenges specific to cross racial adoption in Gauteng*. [Online]. From: [uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/20176/dissertation.pdf](http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/20176/dissertation.pdf)). Accessed: 23 July 2017).
- Foli, K. 2010. Depression in adoptive parents: A model of understanding through grounded theory. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 32(3), 379-400.
- Forte, J.A. 2007. *Human behaviour and the social environment: Models, metaphors and maps for applying theoretical perspectives to practice*. Belmont, C.A: Thomson.
- Frank, L.K. 1959. Multidimensional models. *American Psychologist* [Online]. From: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0046437>. Accessed: 20 July 2017.
- Freeman, M & Nkomo, N. 2006. *Guardianship of orphans and vulnerable children. A survey of current and prospective South African caregivers*. [Online]. From: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16809107](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16809107). (Accessed: 5 April 2016).
- Ge, X., Natsuaki, N., Martine, D.M., Neiderhiser, J.M., Villareal, G., Reid, J.B., Leve, L.D., Shaw, D.S., Scaramella, L & Reiss, D. 2008. Bridging the divide: openness in adoption and post adoption, psychosocial adjustment among birth and adoption parents. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(3): 529-540.
- Gerrand, P.A. & Nathane-Taulela, M. 2015. *Developing a culturally relevant adoption model in South Africa: the way forward*. *International Social Work*, 0(0): 1-11. DOI: 10.1177/0020872812461043. (Accessed: 20 March 2016).
- Gift ov Life. (2015). *Types of Adoption in South Africa*. [Online]. From: <http://giftovlife.com/adoption/adoption-in-south-africa/>. Accessed: 24 August 2018.
- Gishen, D. 1996. *Transracial Adoption in South Africa*. Rand Afrikaans University Thesis. 1-130.
- Goldberg, A., Smith, J., & Kashy, D. 2010. Pre-adoptive factors predicting lesbian, gay and heterosexual couples' relationship quality across the transition to adoptive parenthood. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24: 221-232. Doi:10.1037/a0019615.

- Goldberg, A.E., Moyer, A.M., & Kinkler, L.A. (2013). Lesbian, gay, heterosexual adoptive parent's perceptions of parental bonding during early parenthood. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*, 2(2), 146-162. doi:1001037/a0031834.
- Goldstein, K.E. (2013). *Birth Family Searching and Meaning: A Korean Transracial Adoptee Perspective*. MA(SW) thesis, St. Catherine University, Minnesota.
- Golombok, S. 1994. "Attachment" in Gaber, I & Aldridge, J. (eds) *In the Best Interests of the Child: culture, identity and transracial adoption*. London: Free Association Books.
- Gore, E. 2015. *Adopted children and issues in education*. [Online]. From: [www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk](http://www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk). Accessed: 31 August 2017.
- Gravetter, F.J. & Forzano. L.B. 2003. *Research methods for the behavioural sciences*. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Grinnel, Jr. R.M. & Unrau, Y.A. 2005. *Social work research and evaluation: qualitative and qualitative approaches*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Grinnel, R.M. & Unrau, Y.A. 2008. *Social work research and evaluation: foundations of evidence-based practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Grotevant, H.D., Dunbar, N., Kohler, J.K. and Essau, A. M. L. 2000. Adoptive Identity: How contexts within the beyond the family shape developmental pathways. *Family Relations*, 49(4):379-387.
- Hakim, C. 2000. *Research design: Successful designs for social and economic research*. London: Routledge.
- Hall, B. & Steinberg, G. 2013. *Inside Transracial Adoption: Strength-based, Culture-sensitizing Parenting Strategies for Inter-country or Domestic Adoptive Families That Don't "Match"*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London & Philadelphia, USA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Harf, A., Skandrani, S., Sibeoni, J., Pontvert, C., Revah-Levy, A., Moro, M.R. 2015. [Online]. *Cultural Identity and Internationally Adopted Children: Qualitative Approach to Parental Representations*. From: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0119635>. Accessed: 26 August 2017.
- Harber, A. 1999. Transforming adoption in the "New" South Africa in response to the HIV/AIDS Epidemic. *Adoption & Fostering*, 23(6): 6-15. DOI: 10.1177/030857599902300103.

Harrison, A.O., Wilson, M.N., Pine, C.J., Chan, S.Q., Buriel, R. 1990. Family ecologies of ethnic minority children. *Child Development*. (61):347. [Online]. From: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2366972](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2366972). (Accessed: 23 February 2016).

Hartinger-Saunders, R.M. & Trouteaud, A.R. & Johnson, J.M. 2014. *The Effects of Postadoption Service Need and Use on Child and Adoptive Parent Outcomes*. [Online]. From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2014.953286>. Accessed: 1 June 2018.

Hartinger-Saunders, R.M. & Trouteaud, A.R. 2015. *Underserved Adoptive Families: Disparities in Postadoption Access to Information, Resources, and Services*. *Journal of Family Strengths*, 15(1), Article 6.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I. & Bailey, A. 2011. *Qualitative research methods*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Higham, P. 2006. *Social work: Introducing professional practice*. London: Sage Publications.

Hollingsworth, L.D. 1998. Promoting same-race adoption for children of colour. *Social Work*, 43:104-116.

Hong, J., Algood, C., Chiu, Y., & Lee, S. (2011). An ecological understanding of kinship foster care in the United States. *Child and Family Studies*, 20(6), 863–872.

Info.gov.za. 2007. *Social Development on adoption process*. [Online]. From: <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2007/07091916451005.htm>. (Accessed: 5 August 2016)

Javier, R.A., Baden, A.L., Biafora, F.A & Camacho-Gingerich. 2007. *Handbook of Adoption: Implications for Researchers, Practitioners, and Families*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Jennings, S., Mellish, L., Tasker, F., Lamb, M & Golombok, S. 2014. Why adoption? Gay, Lesbian and Heterosexual Adoptive Parents' Reproductive Experiences and Reasons for Adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 17:3 (205-226).

Jeong Trenka, J. 2003. *The Language of Blood*. Minnesota: Borleas Books.

Johnston, K.E., Swim, J.K., Saltsman, B.M., Deater-Deckard, K., Petrill, A. 2007. Mothers' Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Socialization of Transracially Adopted Asian Children. *Family Relations*, 56(4):390-402.

- Kahn, R. 2006. *Thicker than Water: South African Adoption Stories*. South Africa: Oshun Books.
- King, O. 2012. On adoption, does race matter? *The Guardian*, December 2012.
- Klevan, M. 2012. Resolving race: how adoptive parents discuss choosing the race of their child. *Adoption Quarterly*, 15(2): 88-115.
- Kreuger, L.W. & Neuman, W.L. 2006. *Social work research methods: qualitative and qualitative applications*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Krusiewicz, E.S. & Wood, J.T. 2001. "He was our child from the moment we walked in that room": Entrance stories of adoption-seeking parents. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 18(6):785-803.
- Langenhoven, C. 2017. *Adult Adoptee's Perception of Adoption*. MA(Psych) thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.
- Lawson, L. 1995. The colour of our love. *Millenium Magazine*, August, 56-69.
- Lee, R.M. 2003. The Transracial Adoption Paradox: History, Research and Counselling Implications of Cultural Socialization, *Journal of Counselling Psychology*. 31(6):711-744. [Online]. From: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2366972](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2366972). (Accessed: 23 February 2016).
- Lemmer, E.M. & Meier, C. 2011. Initial teacher education for managing diversity in South African schools: A case study. [Online]. From: <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/19112/final%20revisedmeier%26Lemmer%20Teacher%20Education%20for%20Diversity.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. Accessed: 1 June 2018.
- Levy-Shiff, R., Goldschmidt, I., & Har-Even, D. 1991. Transition to parenthood in adoptive families. *Developmental Psychology*, 27(1), 131-140.
- Lewin, K. 1952. *Field theory in social science*. London: Travistock Publications.
- Lindsay, J.W. 1987. *Open adoption: a caring option*. USA: Morning Glory Press.
- Louw, A. 2009. "Adoption of Children", in T. Boezaart (ed.) *Child Law in South Africa*, pp133-162. Claremont, South Africa: Juta.
- Mahembe, M. 2012. *The psychosocial experiences of immigrant learners at a primary school in the Western Cape*. (MEdPsych) thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.

- Makiname, Z & Mapumulo, Z. 2015. Adoptions to be cheaper, easier. *City Press*, August 17:11.
- Malm, K. & Welte, K. 2010 Exploring motivations to adopt. *Adoption Quarterly*, 13(3-4):185:208.
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. 2011. [Online]. From: <https://livinginnatureengland.wordpress.com>. Accessed: 20 May 2017.
- Mathur, R. 2012. *Conceptualizing Inter-Country Adoption: Meaning, Definitions & Modes*. [Online]. From: [shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bittream/10603/4130/10/10\\_chapter%202.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bittream/10603/4130/10/10_chapter%202.pdf). (Accessed 10 May 2016).
- Maylam, P. 2001. *South Africa's racial past: the history and historiography of racism, segregation and apartheid*. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- McDonald, T., Press, A., Billings, P. & Moore, T. 2007. Partitioning the adoption process to better predict permanency. *Child Welfare*, 86(3):5-32.
- McLaughlin, H. 2012. *Understanding Social Work Research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Sage: London.
- McRoy, R.G., Grotevant, H.D. & White, K.L. 1998. *Openness in adoption: new practices, new issues*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Melina, L.G. 2002. *Raising Adopted Children: Practical, Reassuring Advice for every adoptive parent*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Mokomane, Z., Roach, T.J. 2010. The perceptions, understanding and beliefs of people towards adoption and blockages, which prevent communities from adopting children in South Africa. Child Youth Family & Social Development Programme – *Human Sciences Research Council*. Pretoria.
- Mokomane, Z., Roach, T.J. and The Directorate. 2011. Adoption in South Africa: Trends and patterns in social work practice. *Child & Family Work*, 17: 347-358. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2011.00789.x.
- Moos, A. & Mwaba, K. 2007. *Beliefs and Attitudes about Transracial Adoption among a sample of South African Students*. [Online]. From: <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-1400530431/beliefs-and-attitudes-about-transracial-adoption-among>. (Accessed: 29 March 2018).

- Morrison, A. 2004. *Transracial Adoption: The Pros and Cons and the Parents' Perspective*. [Online]. From: [www.law.harvard.edu/student/orgs/blj/vol 20/morrison.pdf](http://www.law.harvard.edu/student/orgs/blj/vol%20/morrison.pdf). (Accessed: 23 July 2017).
- Mullin, E.S., & Johnson, L. 1999. The role of birth/previously adopted children in families choosing to adopt children with special needs. *Child Welfare*, 78, 579-591.
- Nash, M., Mumford, R. & O'Donoghue, K. 2005. *Social work theories in action*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Noordegraaf, M., van Nijnatten, C., & Elbers, E. 2009. How social workers start to assess the suitability of prospective adoptive parents. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 42 (276-298).
- Ntongana, T. 2014. *Adoption & race: We unpack the issues*. [Online]. From: [www.groundup.org.za](http://www.groundup.org.za). (Accessed: 12 April 2016).
- Owusu-Bempah, K. 2010. *The well-being of children in care*. New York: Routledge.
- Papalia, D.E., Wendkos Olds, S., Duskin Feldman, R. 2008. *A Child's World: Infancy through Adolescence*. 11<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Paquette, D & Ryan, J. 2009. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. [Online]. From: <https://www.dropoutprevention.org>. (Accessed: 2 August 2017).
- Parent. 2011. *The process of adoption in South Africa*. [Online]. From: [http://www.paretn24.com/Getting\\_pregnant/adoption/The-process-of-adoption-in-South-Africa-20110901](http://www.paretn24.com/Getting_pregnant/adoption/The-process-of-adoption-in-South-Africa-20110901). (Accessed: 3 January 2017).
- Park, S. 2012. Caucasian Parents' Experience with Transnational-Transracial Adoption: A Phenomenological Study. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 4,1:479-499.
- Patel, L. 2015. *Social Welfare and Social Development*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cape Town: Oxford University.
- Paulsen, C., & Merighi, J. 2009. Adoption preparedness, cultural engagement and parental satisfaction in intercountry adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 12(1-18).
- Payne, M. 2005. *Modern social work theory*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London: MacMillan Press.
- Pedro, A., & Antipatin, M. 2014. A Qualitative Exploration of South African Women's

Psychological and Emotional Experiences of Infertility. *Open Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 4:327-337.

Perry, S.L. 2011. Contact, congregations, and the children of color: the effects of interracial contact in religious settings on Whites' attitudes towards transracial adoption. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42(6):

Pooley, J.A., Pike, L.T., Drew, N.M. & Breen, L. 2002. *Community, Work and Family*, 5(1) 5-22.

Proudlock, P. (ed) 2014. *South Africa's Progress in Realising Children's Right: A Law Review*. [Online]. From: [www.ci.uct.ac.za](http://www.ci.uct.ac.za). (Accessed: 14 February 2017).

Republic of South Africa. 1923. *Adoption of Children Act 25, 1923*. South African Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. 1937. *Children's Act of 1937*. South African Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. 1960. *Children's Act 33, 1960*. South African Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. 1965. *Children's Amendment Act of 1965*. South African Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. 1983. *Child Care Act, no, 74, 1983*. South African Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. 1991. *Child Care Amendment Act, no 86, 1991*. South African Government Printer.

Republic of South Africa. 2005. *Children's Act, no 38, 2005*. South Africa: Government Printer.

Rochat, T.J., Mokomane, Z., Mitchell, J. and The Directorate. 2016. Public Perceptions, Beliefs and Experiences of Fostering and Adoption: A National Qualitative Study in South Africa. *Children & Society*, 30:130-131.

Romanini, S. 2017. Parental couple experiences of transracial adoption: A phenomenological study. MA.Psych. thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Rondell, F & Murray, A.M. 1974. *New dimensions in adoption*. New York: Crown Publishers.



- Rosenthal, J.A., Groze, V., & Morgan, J... 1996. Services for families adopting children via public child welfare agencies: Use, helpfulness, and need. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 18(1/2), 163-182.
- Rotabi, K.S. & Bunkers, K.M. 2011. In an era of reform: a review of social work literature on inter-country adoption. *SAGE Open*, 1(16):1-16.
- Rowan, B. n.d. *The History of Adoption*. [Online]. From: [www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com). (Accessed 9 March 2016).
- Ruppel, O.C. 1991. *The protection of children's rights under international law from a Namibian perspective*. [Online]. From: [www.kas.de/upload/auslandshomepages/namibia/Children\\_Rights/Children\\_e.pdf](http://www.kas.de/upload/auslandshomepages/namibia/Children_Rights/Children_e.pdf). (Accessed: 27 June 2016).
- Rushton, A., Mayes, P., Dance, C. & Quinton, D. 2003. Parenting late-placed children: The development of new relationships and the challenge of behaviour problems. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 8, 389-400.
- Rushton, A. & Monck, E. 2009. Adopters' experiences of preparation to parent children with serious difficulties. *Adoption & Fostering*, 33(2): 4-12.
- Sagar & Hitchings. 2007. The Adoption and Children Act 2002: a level playing field for same-sex adopters? *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 19(1).
- Samuels, G.M. 2009. "Being Raised by White People": Navigating Racial Difference Among Adopted Multiracial Adults. *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 71(1), 80-94.
- Santona, A., & Zavattini, G. 2005. Partnering and parenting expectations in adoptive couples. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 20(3), 309-322.
- Schmid, J. 2014. *Recounting stories in South African Child Welfare*. [Online]. From: <http://socialwork.journals.ac.za>. (Accessed: 1 April 2016).
- Schoeman, J. Director, Cotlands. 2006. Interview by S. Findlay. (Transcript). 17 January. Illovo.
- Schroeder, E., & Nichola, T. 2006. The adoption of HIV/Aids orphans and food security in rural Ingwavuma, South Africa. *International Journal of Technology Management and Sustainable Development*, 5(2), 173-187.



- Schmid, J. 2012. *Trends in South African Child Welfare*. [Online]. From: <https://www.uj.ac.za> (Accessed: 5 May 2016).
- Schweiger, W.K. & O'Brien, M. 2005. Special Needs Adoption : An Ecological Systems Approach. *Family Relations*, 54:512-522.
- Scileppi, J.A., Teed, E. L. & Torres, R.D. 2000. Community psychology: a common sense approach to mental health, in: S. B. van Wyk & A. Grundlingh (eds.). *South African mental health context*. Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 23-49.
- Semi-Open Adoption: Disadvantages – American Pregnancy Association. 2017. [Online]. From: [Americanpregnancy.org/adoption/semi-open-adoption-disadvantages](http://Americanpregnancy.org/adoption/semi-open-adoption-disadvantages). (Accessed 28 January 2018)
- Sheafor, R. W., Horejsi, C. R. & Horejsi, G. A. 2000. *Techniques and guidelines for social work practice*. London: Allyn and Bacon.
- Siegel, D.H. 2003. Open adoption of infants: Adoptive parent's feelings seven years later. *Social Work*, 48:3, 409-419.
- Siegel, D. H. 2013. Open adoption: adoptive parents' reactions two decades later. *Social Work*, 58(1): 43-58.
- Siegel, D. H. 2015. Adoption trends today. *Social Work Today*, 15(6):18.
- Silverman, A.R. 1993. Outcomes of transracial adoption. *The future of Children: Adoption*, 3:104-108.
- Simon, R.J. & Alstein, H. 1996. The Case for Transracial Adoption. *Child and Youth Care Review*. Vol (18) (1/2): 5-22. [Online]. From: [www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org). (Accessed 17 February 2016).
- Singer, L.M., Brodzinsky, D.M., Ramsay, D., Steir, M., & Waters, E. 1985. Mother-infant attachment in adoptive families. *Child Development*, 56, 1543-1551.
- Skelton, A. 2009. *The development of a fledging child rights jurisprudence in Eastern and Southern Africa based on international and regional instruments*. [Online]. From: [www.ahrlj.up.ac.za](http://www.ahrlj.up.ac.za). (Accessed: 10 May 2016).
- Skweyiya, Z. (n.d.) *Practice Guidelines in Intercountry Adoptions*. [Online]. From: [www.dsd.gov.za](http://www.dsd.gov.za). (Accessed: 12 April 2016).

Soanes, C & Stevenson, A. (ed). 2009. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. United States: Oxford University Press.

South Africa. Department of Welfare. 1997. White Paper for Social Welfare: principles, guidelines, recommendations, proposed policies and programmes for developmental social welfare in South Africa. (Government Notice R1108 of 1997). *Government Gazette*.

South Africa. 2006. Children's Act (Act no 38) of 2005. [Online]. From: [http://www.acts.co.za/childrensact\\_2005/index.htm](http://www.acts.co.za/childrensact_2005/index.htm). (Accessed: 5 February 2016).

Steinberg, G. & Hall, B. 2000. *Inside transracial adoption: Strength-based, culture-sensitising parenting*. Perspectives Press, Indianapolis.

Stringer, E.T. 2007. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. *Action Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Suwalsky, J.T., Padila, C.M., Yuen, C.X., Horn, E.P., Bradley, A.L., Putnick, D.L. & Bornstein, M.H. 2015. Adoptive and non-adoptive mother-child behavioural interaction: comparative study at 4 years of age. *Adoption Quarterly*, 18(3), 196-216

Swick, K & Williams, R. 2006. An analysis of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological perspective for early childhood educators: Implications for working with families experiencing stress. *Early Childhood Education*, 33(5), 371-378.

Szabo, C.P., & Ritchken, D. A. 2002. Race and family placement: A case report and review. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 32 (4), 60-63.

Tanga, K. & Nyasha, P.T. 2017. Diverse Perceptions of Cross-Racial Adoptions in South Africa. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 27(2) 231-238.

Tartakovsky, M. 2017. How to Tell Your Child They're Adopted. [Online]. From: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/how-to-tell-your-child-theyre-adopted/>. Accessed: 28 August 2017.

Tassone, C., Ray, P. 2010. *Exploring district child protection structures and services as sustainable means of linking community child protection mechanisms and national child protection systems in developing countries*. [Online]. From: [www.gcps.org.uk](http://www.gcps.org.uk). (Accessed: 31 March 2016).

Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K. & Painter, D. 2006. *Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*. Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press (Pty) Ltd.

*Time off work breakthrough for adoptive parents.* 2017. [Online]. From: <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-11-28-time-off-work-breakthrough-for-adoptive-parents>. (Accessed 30 December 2017).

Timm, T.M., Mooradian, J.K. & Hock, R.M. 2011. Exploring Core Issues in adoption: Individual and Marital Experiences of Adoptive Mothers. *Adoption Quarterly*, 14(4), 268-283.

*The Adoption Process.* n.d. [Online]. From: [http://www.adoption.org.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=40&Itemid=41](http://www.adoption.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=40&Itemid=41). (Accessed: 6 January 2017).

*The State of the World's Children.* n.d. [Online]. From: [http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/SOWC\\_Spec%20Ed\\_CRC\\_Main%20Report\\_EN\\_090409.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc/pdfs/SOWC_Spec%20Ed_CRC_Main%20Report_EN_090409.pdf) (Accessed: 6 January 2017).

Thoburn, J. 1988. *Child placement: principles and practices.* Great Britain: Wildwood House.

Tyebjee, T. 2003. *Attitude, interest and motivation for adoption and foster care.* [Online]. From: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov.pmc.ac.za](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1456881/). (Accessed 10 July 2017).

Ung, T., Harris O'Connor, S., & Pillidge, R. (2012). The development of racial identity in transracially adopted people: An ecological approach. *Adoption & Fostering*, 36, 73–84.

UNICEF South Africa. 2010. *Protection for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: Alternative Care.* From: [www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection\\_6633.html](http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/protection_6633.html). (Accessed: 17 May 2016).

Valentine, D., Conway, P., & Randolph, J. 1988. Placement disruptions: Perspectives of adoptive parents. *Journal of Social Work and Human Sexuality*, 6(1), 133-153.

Verbovaya, O. 2016. Theoretical Explanatory Model of International Adoption Failure: Attachment and Ecological Systems Perspectives. *Adoption Quarterly*, 19(3):198.

Vonk, E.M., 2001. Cultural competence for trans-racial adoptive parents. *Social Work*, 46(3):246-255.

Vonk, E.M., Lee, J. & Crolley-Simic, J. 2010. Cultural socialization practices in domestic and international trans-racial adoption. *Adoption Quarterly*, 13(3-4): 227-247.

Van der Walt, G. 2014. *The History of the Law of Adoption in South Africa.* [Online]. From: [reference.sabinet.co.za.ez.sun.ac.za](http://reference.sabinet.co.za/saonline/saonline.html). (Accessed: 10 May 2016).

Wahl, S.T., McBride, M.C. & Schrodtt, P. 2009. Becoming “point and click” parents: A case study of communication and online adoption. *Journal of Family Communication*, 5(4):279-294.

Wait, J., Meyer. & Loxton, H. 2005. *Human development: a psychological approach*. Parow East: Ebony Books.

Ward, M. 1998. The impact of adoption on the new parents’ marriage. *Adoption Quarterly*, 2(2), 57-78.

Ward, E. 2011. Taking the next step: enquiries to National Adoption Week one year on. *Adoption & Fostering*, 35(6): 6-17.

Waterman, B. 2011. Mourning the loss builds the bond: Primal communication between foster, adoptive, or stepmother and child. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 6(4):277-300.

Watson, M.T., Stern, N.M., Foster, T.W. 2012. Helping Parents and Adoptees through the Adoption Process Using Group Work. *The Family Journal: Counselling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 20(4)433-440.

Wegar, K. 2000. Adoption, family ideology and social stigma: Bias in community attitudes, adoption research, and practice. *Family Relations*, 49(4):363-370.

Western Cape Government. 2016. *Adopting a Child*. [Online].

From: [www.westerncape.gov.za/service/adopting-child](http://www.westerncape.gov.za/service/adopting-child). Accessed: 8 August 2016

Wright, M.A. 2000. *I’m Chocolate, You’re Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children in a Race Conscious World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company.

Wolfson Vorster, R. 2014. *Your guide to adoption in South Africa*. [Online]. From: <https://www.all4women.co.za/409895/parenting/adoption/guide-adoption-south-africa>.

Wolfson Vorster, R. 2014. *Why men don’t want to adopt*. [Online]. From: <http://becomingamom.co.za/many-men-dont-want-adopt>. Accessed: 5 January 2018

Wolfson Vorster, R. 2015. *Abandoned children, SA’s dirty little secret*. [Online]. From: [www.dailymaverick.co.za](http://www.dailymaverick.co.za). (Accessed: 8 February 2016).

Wolfson Vorster, R. 2015. *The great power struggle over adoption*. [Online]. From: [www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-09-06-op-ed-the-great-power-struggle-over-adoption/#](http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-09-06-op-ed-the-great-power-struggle-over-adoption/#), WreNR4hubIU. Accessed: 25 March 2018.

Wolfson Vorster, R. 2016. *Home Affairs Names and Shames SA's Abandoned Children*.  
From: <http://becomingamom.co.za/home-affairs-names-and-shames-sas-abandoned-children>.  
Accessed: 3 May 2017.

Wolfson Vorster, R. 2016. *Sounding the death knell for adoption?* [Online]. From:  
[www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-11-15-sounding-the-death-knell-for-](http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-11-15-sounding-the-death-knell-for-adoption/)  
[adoption/£.WD81X\\_1971V](http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-11-15-sounding-the-death-knell-for-adoption/).

Wright, M.A. 2000. *I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children in a Race Conscious World*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company.

Yourparenting.co.za. 2013. *Adoption in South Africa: the basics / Adoption / Your parenting*. [Online]. From: <http://www.yourparenting.co.za/fertility/adoption/adoption-101>.  
Accessed: 4 July

You Magazine. 2016. *Everything you need to know about adopting a child in SA*. [Online].  
From: [www.news24.com/You/Archive/everything-you-need-to-know-about-adopting-a-](http://www.news24.com/You/Archive/everything-you-need-to-know-about-adopting-a-child-in-sa-20170718)  
[child-in-sa-20170718](http://www.news24.com/You/Archive/everything-you-need-to-know-about-adopting-a-child-in-sa-20170718). (Accessed: December 2017).

Zordich, P.M. 2012. *Cocooning with your newly adopted child*. [Online]. From:  
[www.lianalowenstein.com/articlesParentAdoptedChild.pdf](http://www.lianalowenstein.com/articlesParentAdoptedChild.pdf). Accessed: 8 January 2018

## **APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

#### **Transracial Adoption in South Africa: Challenges Faced by Adoptive Parents**

Researcher: S.J. Jackson

---

#### **1. PROFILE OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

1.1 Indicate your age

<b>Age</b>	<b>Mark with an X</b>
18-30 years	
31-40 years	
41-50 years	
51-60 years	

1.2 Indicate your marital status?

<b>Single</b>	<b>Living together</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Separated/Divorced</b>

1.3. Education/training: \_\_\_\_\_

1.4 Indicate your population group?

Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Other: Specify

1.5. Employment (specify):

---



---

## 2. BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN AND ADOPTED CHILDREN

2.1 Indicate the number of children you have and how many are biological and adopted?

Total Number of Children	Number of biological children?	Number of adopted children?

2.2 Indicate the race of the adopted child/children?

Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Other: Specify

2.3 Indicate the age your child/children were when you adopted them?

Birth – 1 year	1 – 2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	5 – 10 years

2.4 Indicate their current age(s)?

2-3 years	3-4 years	5 – 10 years

## 3. THE ADOPTION PROCESS

3.1 What was your marital status when you adopted your child?

---

3.2 Indicate whether you used a private adoption agency or government organisation?

Private	Government Organisation

3.3 Indicate how long the process took from start to finish?

6-12 months	12-18 months	18 – 24 months	2 – 3 years	3 – 4 years	5 years +

3.4 What form of adoption did you choose? (Open/Closed)

---

3.5 Describe your experience with the adoption process?

---



---



---



---



---

#### 4. CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED REGARDING TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

4.1 What are the challenges that you experienced with:

- Your immediate relationships?

- Spouse

---



---

- Family

---



---

- Attachment



- 
- 
- Siblings
- 
- 

4.2 What were the challenges you experienced with:

- Systems outside the family?

- Workplace
- 
- 

- School
- 
- 

- Biological family
- 
- 

- Friends of children
- 
- 

- Other
- 
- 

4.3 What were the challenges you experienced with:

- Support Services?

- Pre adoption services
- 
- 

- Post adoption services
- 
-

- Types of support that you would have liked

---

---

Explain your experience of challenges with transracial adoption regarding:

- Societal Perceptions?

- Absence of racial resemblance?

---

---

- Protection of child's heritage?

- Culture

---

---

- Language

---

---

- Societal views about transracial adoption

---

---

- Managing difficult questions and comments

---

---

4.5 Tell me what you consider to be the 3 main challenges you experienced throughout the process of adopting your child?

---

---

---

## **APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT**



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

### **STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

---

#### **TITLE:**

#### **TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION IN SOUTH AFRICA: CHALLENGES FACED BY ADOPTIVE PARENTS**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Sandra Jacki Jackson, a Masters student from the Social Work Department at the University of Stellenbosch. The results of this study will become part of a research report. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a parent who has adopted a child transracially, which places you in an appropriate position to identify challenges faced by transracial adoptive parents and to provide suitable recommendations on this topic.

#### **1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to gain in-depth understanding of how parents (in the Western Cape, South Africa), who have adopted transracially, experience the process, with regards to adoption services and challenges they may have encountered.

In order to reach this goal, the following will be objectives in the study:

1. To explore policy documents and legislation pertaining to adoption in order to give a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by adoptive parents throughout the adoption process in South Africa.
2. To describe transracial adoption within an ecological perspective in order to develop an understanding of the challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents.
3. To investigate the challenges experienced by adoptive parents when adopting transracially.
4. To present conclusions based on the collected data and make recommendations for future research challenges experienced by transracial adoptive parents in South Africa.

#### **2. PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following:

A semi-structured interview schedule will be utilized to gather information confidentially. You need not indicate your name or any particulars on the interview schedule. The schedule will be completed during the one-on-one interview conducted by the researcher.

### **3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Any uncertainties on any of the aspects of the schedule you may experience during the interview can be discussed and clarified at any time. Should the impact of the experiences you share during the interview cause you emotional harm, Arise will ensure that debriefing and counselling is arranged with a registered social worker or psychologist at a mutually convenient venue. Alternatively, should you feel uncomfortable receiving these services by Arise, Danielle Meintjies, a social worker in private practice, will provide debriefing and counselling for you.

#### Psychologist at Arise:

Sonia Hinder

Phone Number: 021-6334058

#### Social Worker in Private Practice:

Danielle Meintjies

Phone Number: 021-9871275

### **5. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND / OR TO SOCIETY**

The results of this study will assist prospective adoptive parents in gaining valuable knowledge about the adoption process. Furthermore, the research will aid adoption service providers, and especially social workers, in providing an improved service to prospective parents, as well as a support for those who have already adopted.

### **6. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

No payment in any form will be received for participating in this study.

### **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding where each interview schedule is numbered. All completed interviews will be managed, analyzed and processed by the researcher.

The interview will be audio-taped. The participant can at any time ask to review the audio-tape. The audio-tape will be kept in a safe place in a locked cabinet accessible to the researcher only. The recordings will be deleted after the researcher have transcribed and analyzed the data.

Transcriptions will be safeguarded on the personal computer of the researcher with code that is known only to the researcher.

The study will be released by Stellenbosch University in the form of a thesis that is available for viewing to those who have access to the University's Library website.

## **8. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer, and remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so, e.g. should you influence other participants in the completion of their questionnaires.

## **9. IDENTIFICATION OF SUPERVISOR/ STUDENT-RESEARCHER**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

**Supervisor:** Dr M Strydom, Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch,

Tel. 021-808 2070, E-Mail: [mstrydom@sun.ac.za](mailto:mstrydom@sun.ac.za)

**Researcher:** Sandra Jackson

Tel. 0724539073, E-Mail: [shalford@telkomsa.net](mailto:shalford@telkomsa.net)

## **10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [[mfouche@sun.ac.za](mailto:mfouche@sun.ac.za); 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

<b>SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE</b>
--

The information above was described to me the participant by Sandra Jacki Jackson in English and the participant is in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to him / her. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his / her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

---

**Name of Participant**

---

**Signature of Participant**

---

**Date**

<b>SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER</b>
---

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to \_\_\_\_\_ [name of subject/participant]. [He / She] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

---

**Signature of Investigator/Researcher**

---

**Date**



UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY  
jou kennisverhoort • your knowledge partner

**Approved with Stipulations**  
**New Application**

06-Mar-2017  
Jackson, Sandra SJ

**Proposal #: SU-HSD-004131**

**Title: Transracial Adoption in South Africa: Challenges Faced by Adoptive Parents**

Dear Mrs Sandra Jackson,

Your **New Application** received on **02-Feb-2017**, was reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities) via Committee Review procedures on **23-Feb-2017**.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **23-Feb-2017 -22-Feb-2018**

**Present Committee Members:**

De Villiers, Mare MRH  
Fouche, Magdalena MG  
Hansen, Leonard LD  
Lambrechts, Derica D  
Hall, Susan SLC  
Graham, Clarissa CJ  
Lesch, Anthea AM  
Toi, Jerall J  
Williams, Aden A  
Nel, Michelle M  
Prozesky, Heidi HE  
Rawlings, Douglas DE  
Brand, Alwer? A  
Mariri, Tendai T  
Welman, Karen KE

The following stipulations are relevant to the approval of your project and must be adhered to:

You may proceed with the envisaged research provided that the following stipulations, relevant to the approval of your project are adhered to or addressed. Some of these stipulations may require your response. Where a response is required, please respond to the REC within 30 days of the date of this letter. Your approval would expire automatically should your response not be received by the REC within 30 days of the date of this letter.

If a response is required, please respond to the points raised in a separate cover letter titled "Response to REC stipulations" AND if requested, HIGHLIGHT or use the TRACK CHANGES function to indicate corrections / amendments of ATTACHED DOCUMENTATION, to allow rapid scrutiny and appraisal.

#### 1. PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT

1.1) The researcher will recruit parents with the assistance of an organisation called Arise. Arise offers pre- and post-adoption support. It is not clear from the application if Arise is also an adoption agency through which children are placed with families. The researcher is requested to confirm the role and function of Arise in relation to the potential participants who will take part in the study. [RESPONSE REQUIRED]

1.2) The researcher will recruit participants through the use of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The following inclusion criteria are stipulated: Transracial adoptive parents, with children between the ages of 2-10 years, residing in the Western Cape Province. Besides these inclusion criteria, the researcher does not indicate what other criteria will be taken into account that may be important in the data collection process, for example, will she recruit only families in which parents are both of the same race, or mixed race? Will she recruit both same-sex and heterosexual couples to participate in her study? Single-parents? What length of time since adoption will be considered for inclusion in the study? It is not clear whether the researcher will interview one or both parents. The researcher is invited to respond to the REC. [RESPONSE REQUIRED]

1.3) Arise will contact the transracial adoptive parents on the database to introduce the study and invite them to participate in the study. They will provide a list of interested participants to the researcher for her to contact. All interviews will take place at the Arise offices. The researcher may want to consider alternative locations for the interviews to accommodate participants' preferences, should participants not feel comfortable with being interviewed at Arise premises.

#### 2. PROTECTION OF DATA, (BOTH PAPER AND ELECTRONIC)

The researcher confirms that hard copies of data will be stored in a safe, locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Where will this cabinet be located? How will soft copies of data be stored? E.g., transcripts, audio of interviews etc. [RESPONSE REQUIRED]

#### 3. INFORMED CONSENT AND ASSENT PROCESSES AND FORMS

3.1) The informed consent process is not described. The informed consent form requires language editing before it is used in the study. The researcher must also include her own contact information on the form. The researcher must also include the contact information for the counsellor/psychologist who will provide support to participants. [ACTION REQUIRED]

3.2) The researcher mentions that the study will be released by Stellenbosch University. She must contextualise this for the research participants who may not understand what this means or how it will impact them. [RESPONSE AND ACTION REQUIRED]

#### 4. ADEQUATE MITIGATION OF RISK; COUNSELLING SERVICES ETC?

The researcher indicates that participants who experience distress will be debriefed and referred for counselling to a social worker or psychologist employed at Arise.

Given that participants may report challenges that they experienced with the organisation during the adoption process (see comments in point 1), the researcher should consider providing an alternative, independent option for counselling and support for participants who experience distress. [RESPONSE REQUIRED]

#### 5. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE [NO RESPONSE REQUIRED – FOR CONSIDERATION ONLY]

The researcher has included an interview schedule that includes various areas of questioning that will guide the interviews. The questions contained in the interview schedule are aligned with the purpose of the research. There are some leading questions in the interview schedule that the researcher may consider revising.

#### 6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

How will the researcher access sensitive data in the public domain? (See point 2, REC application form). [RESPONSE REQUIRED]

Please provide a letter of response to all the points raised IN ADDITION to HIGHLIGHTING or using the TRACK CHANGES function to indicate ALL the corrections/amendments of ALL DOCUMENTS clearly in order to allow rapid scrutiny and appraisal.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.



Please remember to use your **proposal number** (SU-HSD-004131) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

**Included Documents:**

DESC Report

REC: Humanities New Application

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham  
REC Coordinator  
Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)